The Thesis Writing Process

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Learning Objectives

• Focus on writing process
• Explore strategies for starting and maintaining writing
• Identify self-management strategies to aid process
• Consider structure and outlining
• Build your argument
• Share strategies and experiences

Murray's Model (2002)

Social
• Interactions, discussion
• Support

Psychological
• Motivation, goal setting, self-monitoring

Rhetorical = Writing
• Regular writing
• “Snack” writing + “binge” writing
How to write a lot (Silvia 2007)

Barriers:
“Can’t find time to write”
“I need to do some more analyses first” aka
“I need to read a few more articles”
“To write a lot I need a new computer...”
“I’m waiting until I feel like it”

Self-management & Planning

• Desires & Wants v.s Goals & Tasks
• SMART goals

SMART Goal Setting

• S = Specific
• M = Measurable
• A = Action
• R = Realistic
• T = Time-based
• Desires & Wants v.s Goals & Tasks
• SMART goals
• Planning tools
  – Timeline
  – Weekly

Possible Timeline
Submit - 27 January 2011

Proposed draft deadlines:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ch. 1</th>
<th>Ch. 2</th>
<th>Ch. 3</th>
<th>Ch. 4</th>
<th>Ch. 5</th>
<th>Ch. 6</th>
<th>Ch. 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Intro</td>
<td>LR</td>
<td>Methods</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>Document/Inventory</td>
<td>Discussion</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Draft 1</td>
<td>Final Revision</td>
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Overview – Gannt chart

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<th>Month</th>
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web: http://student-learning.tcd.ie | email: student.learning@tcd.ie
Self-management & Planning

- Desires & Wants v.s Goals & Tasks
- SMART goals
- Planning tools
  - Timeline
  - Weekly
- Deadlines
- Writing routine

Writing Strategies

- Notebook/journal
- Write to prompts
- Freewriting
- Generative writing
- Writing Sandwich

Writing to prompts

- What writing have I done and what would I like to do?
- Where do my ideas come from?
- How does what I read compare with my own views?
- What I want to write about next is…
- What do I want to write about next?
Freewriting

- Writing for 5 minutes
- Without stopping
- In sentences
- Private – no external reader
- No structure needed
- Topic related to your research
- Like brainstorming in sentences

Generative writing

- Writing for 5 minutes
- Without stopping
- In sentences
- Focusing on one topic (maybe from your freewriting
- To be read by someone else

Writing Sandwich

- Writing – 10 minutes
- Talking – 10 minutes
- Writing – 10 minutes
Interactive reading & note taking

• Collect notes not articles or books
• How do you make notes?
• Make use of bibliographic programme
• “…your thoughts about others’ work” (Single 2010, p. 79)
• Pre-Writing

What to make notes on

– Big Picture
– Big Point
– Premise or Hypothesis
– Data, sources, arguments
– Theories or conceptual
– Analytical or research methods
– Results or analysis
– Quotations
– How it influences your research
Structure & Outlining

- Mapping

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Table 1: Using tables to organise your information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Author (study date)</th>
<th>Focus and evidence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sherbar and Weiser (1999)</td>
<td>Managerial approach to decision making, work and roles to managers can result in increased awareness of own roles and responsibilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mentzer (1994)</td>
<td>Examine the perception of action research (AR) to discuss how AL and AR can develop a balance of knowledge and action in the management process.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Neugarten and McCann (1945)</td>
<td>Focus on the nature of the role of management, work and how managers spend their time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gourier (1999)</td>
<td>Focuses on communication skills and relates them to different approaches to problem solving and decision making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harrison (1999)</td>
<td>Case study of the International Management Centre shows that graduate students develop a variety of competencies in an AL setting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chan (1994)</td>
<td>weitere Informationen zu den Befunden</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Structure & Outlining

- Mapping
- **One page outline**
  - Generic thesis structure
  - Use table of contents feature
- Allocate word count for each section
- Design sub-sections
- Write in layers

Outlining – Level 1

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Background</th>
<th>Context/Background</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Objectives</td>
<td>Theme/Issue/Topic 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Method</td>
<td>Theme/Issue/Topic 2</td>
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<tr>
<td>Findings</td>
<td>Theme/Issue/Topic 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusions</td>
<td>Conclusion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Outlining – Level 2

I. Chapter 1 – Introduction.
   1. A statement of the problem.
   2. Definition of terms.
   3. Review of literature.
   4. Description of the remaining chapters.
II. Chapter 2 – Methods Used.
    1. Requirements and specifications.
II. Chapter 3 through N = 1 – The middle chapters depend on your particular project.
IV. Chapter N – Conclusions.
    1. Statement of your results.
    2. Statement of problems left unsolved.
VI. Appendix B – Maintenance Manual.
VII. Appendix C – Design Documents.
VIII. Appendix D – Source Code.
IX. Appendix E – Test Suite.
Writing in layers

• Write a list of chapter headings
• Write a sentence or two on contents of each chapter
• Write lists of headings for each section in each chapter
• Make notes for each heading on how you will develop the section
• Write an introductory paragraph for each chapter
• Write the word count, draft number and date at top of first page
Focus Statements

• A 1-4 sentence statement of your research in the first person, active voice
• Must be concise, clear, compelling
• Can help you decide a topic, not permanent!
• It will be re-worked and it will evolve
• It’s a tool!!

Example Focus Statement

I’m interested in how teachers in HE can develop their students’ learning skills within the context of the subject. I will use a mixed methods approach based on a constructivist approach. I want to interview both first-year students and their teachers to get their view on what they did, how it was perceived, if they thought it was effective. I’ll also measure learning and study strategies before and after the teachers’ learning skills interventions. I hope the research will lead to recommendations on how teachers can help their students improve their learning and performance.

Signposting

• Indicator words for claims
  – Therefore, thus, hence, so, as a result
• Indicator words for reasons
  – Because, since, on account of, for, in view of, for the reason that
• Similarity, contrasts, alternatives
• Listing
• Reporting verbs

http://www.phrasebank.manchester.ac.uk/
Linking words & phrases
In large gene families with tandem repeats, as is the case for nrDNA, unequal crossing-over may be more important than gene conversion in the concerted evolution process (Li, 1997). For example, the number of repeats can fluctuate without having any adverse effects. With a larger number of repeats being exchanged, the rate of concerted evolution increases as well. Correspondingly, homogeneity increases as the number of repeats increases. Rate then increases as homogeneity among the copies increases, leading to a self-feeding repetition. As a result of this process, it is believed that nrDNA is found in up to thousands of copies in the nuclear genome (Baldwin et al., 1995).

Your Intentions


Revision

• At organisational level
  – Based on table of contents
  – Chapters and sections

• At content level
  – Preview, smooth, review
  – Section by section

• Targeted revision
  – Grammatical errors
  – Idiosyncrasies
Overcoming blocks?

- Freewriting & Generative writing
- Mind-mapping
- Verbalise
- Avoid perfectionism
- Writing buddy
- Seek support
- Visualise completed thesis
- Combine strategies

Tips for successful writing

- Plan to write regularly
- Make a time plan and stick to it
- Write up section as soon as it’s ready
- Stop writing at a point where you could go on – makes it easier to start next time!
- Decide where and when best for you
- Don’t write when exhausted
- Seek support

REFERENCES


Our details

• Website: http://student-learning.tcd.ie

• Email: student.learning@tcd.ie

• Facebook: facebook.com/sldtcd

• Twitter: twitter.com/StudentLearnin1

• Phone: 01-8961407