How To Write A Project

Learning Enhancement Team

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Variety is the Spice of Life!

Different Schools…   ….Different Rules

- Can you use 'I' in an academic text?
- Should an essay have section headings?
- How long is a report?
- Do you use primary or secondary research?
- Footnotes, endnotes or no notes?
- Harvard style referencing or MLA? What about APA?

Which school are you in? What is acceptable and what is unacceptable in your field?

Always check in your module handbooks or with your tutor if you are concerned about appropriacy

Project Writing Aims

— To discuss selecting a research question / area

— To become familiar with the typical structures of a proposal

— To become familiar with the typical content of a proposal

— To discuss applying for ethical approval

Project Writing

What does it mean to write a project? A well written project shows that you:

— Are able to undertake substantial study

— Are able to develop a personal specialism

— Can show skills in finding, selecting and critically analyzing information

— Can show skills in decision making, task management and problem-solving

— Cam show skills in summarising and presenting findings

You may also to have to write a proposal for your Project. If so, the *AWL Open Workshop* **How To Write A Proposal** could help.
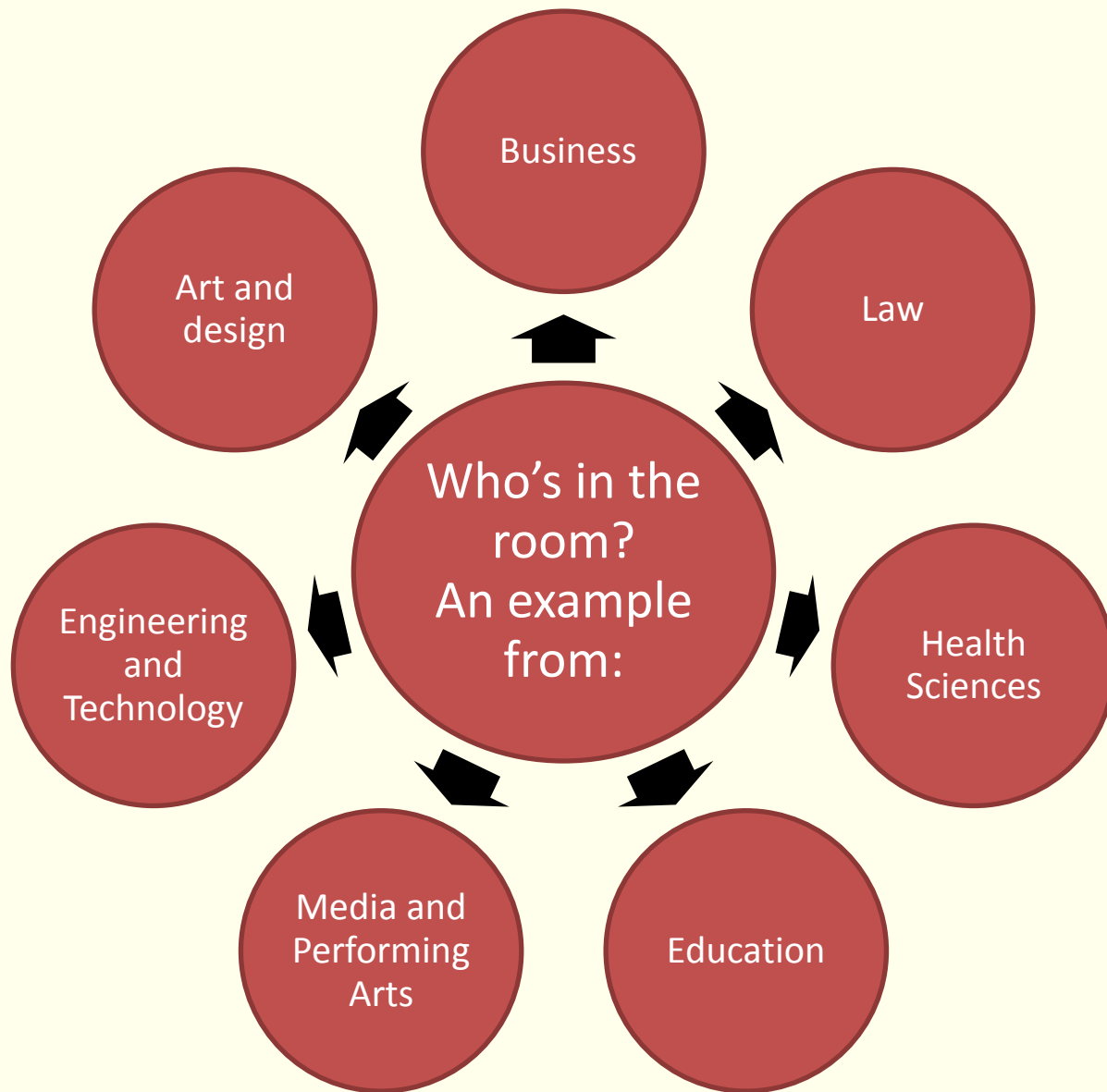
Projects

What do you think is the difference between a project and a dissertation?

— Projects are usually – though not always! – shorter

— Projects might

- Create something
- Develop something
- Explore something
- Implement something

— Can best de differentiated according to:
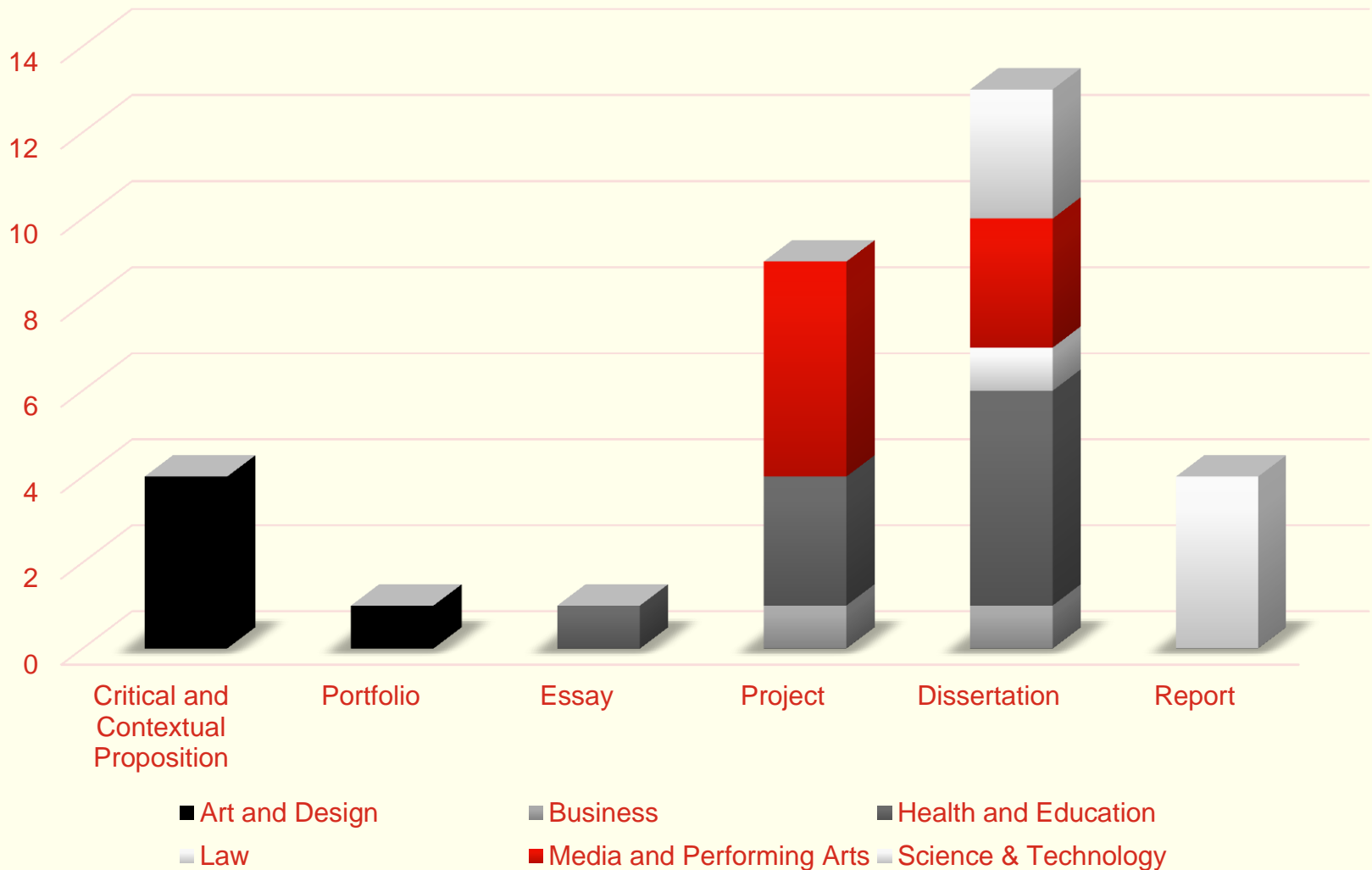
- Methodology
- Outcomes

Topic Areas For A Project

Possible topic areas could include any of the following, so it's important to remember that different schools have different expectations – its very likely that your Project will include elements from more than one of these areas:

— A Practical Application

- For example, developing education materials of building a prototype.

— An Artefact Study

- For example, reflecting on or analysing a piece of art or architecture

— Testing an Hypothesis

- This could be in the form of an experiment, but it could also include seeing if a theory is being (successfully?) applied to a situation

— A Library / Conceptual Study

- Usually focused only on secondary research; a detailed, extended essay or critique based on the literature

— A Research Based Study

- This could be a case study / a report / an analysis / evaluation using interviews, observations and/or questionnaires (primary research)
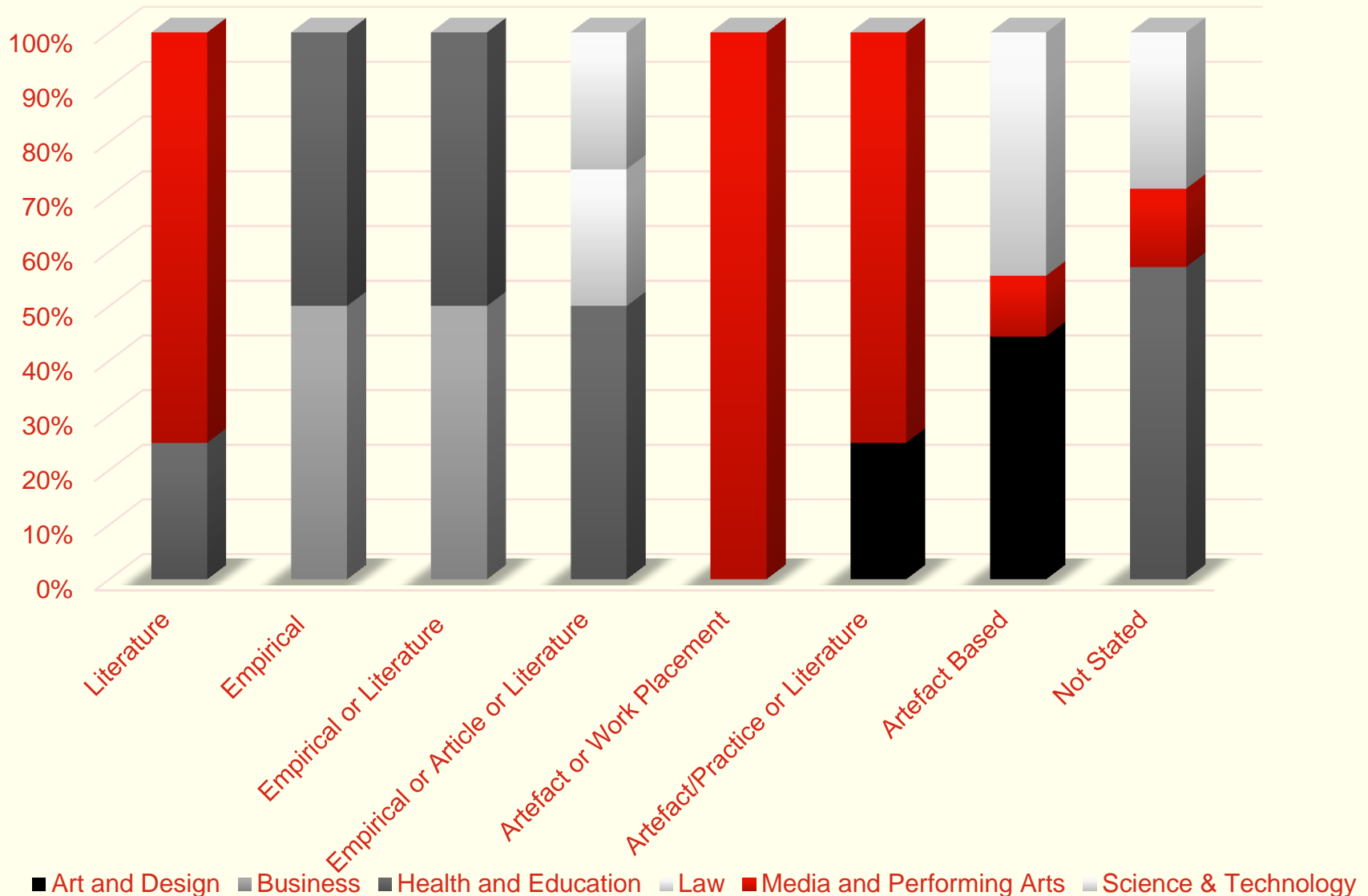
Expectation

Project Type

Chart legend: ■ Art and Design ■ Business ■ Health and Education ■ Law ■ Media and Performing Arts ■ Science & Technology

X-axis categories: Literature, Empirical, Empirical or Literature, Empirical or Article or Literature, Artefact or Work Placement, Artefact/Practice or Literature, Artefact Based, Not Stated

Y-axis: 0% to 100%

Expectation Again

You will find that there are different discipline influences, depending on your school or department. These may affect:

— Your choice of research method/s

— What is good data/evidence

— What is 'good' writing

— How to arrange theory-practice

— What balance between theory and practice

— How to see problem-solution

— Which referencing convention

— What referencing 'style'

Project Types
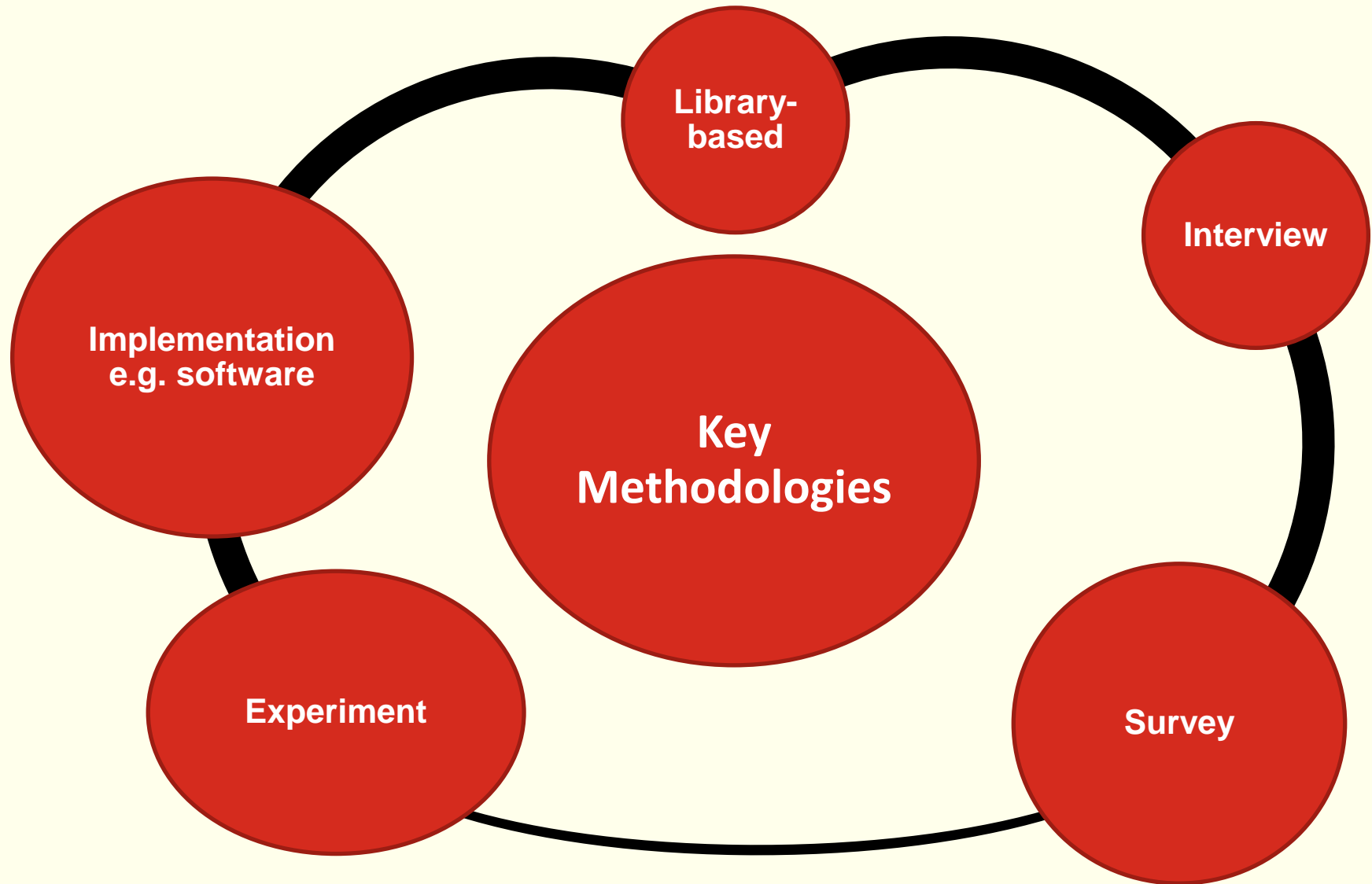
Structure

There are many types of Projects, but a <u>typical</u> structure may be:

— Abstract / Executive Summary

— Table of Contents

— Introduction

— Lit Review

— Methodology

— Discussion of Findings / Impact Assessment

— Conclusions / Recommendations

— Bibliography / List of References

— Appendices

Introductions

With your partner, discuss these questions:

— What's it for?

— What does it prove to lecturers?

— How is it different from an essay introduction?

— What can it do for your dissertation?

Introductions

What should an introduction include?

Orientation to the topic

— General background information, setting context, showing relevance or importance, defining or classifying any terms, exploring previous seminal literature, raising an issue or problem
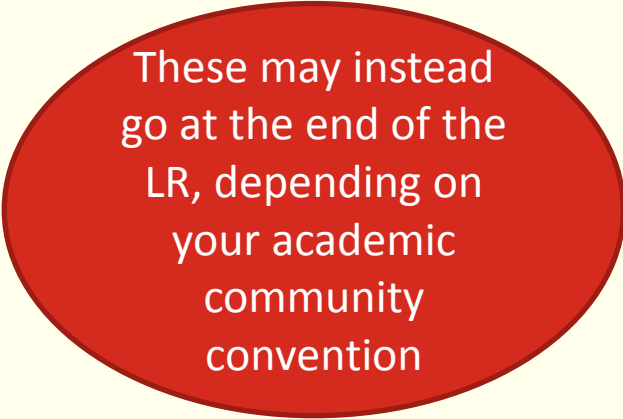
Outline of the whole work, plus any scope

Depending on your academic community:

— Will it lead to the RQ/thesis?

— Will the LR lead to the RQ/thesis?

— Will the LR be contained within the introduction?

Introductions

What does it mean to 'orientate' the reader? Why is this so important?

— (May be adapted from your proposal) *Depending on your proposal type*

— Establish context, give background, show importance or relevance of topic

— Brief synopsis of literature or current paradigm(s)

— Indicate problem, controversy or gap in the field

— Establish desirability, significance or value of the study

— (Explaining reasons for the writer's interest in the topic)

— Defining certain key terms

— Provide an outline of the dissertation structure

— *Listing the research questions or hypotheses*

— *Briefly stating the research method(s)*

These may instead go at the end of the LR, depending on your academic community convention
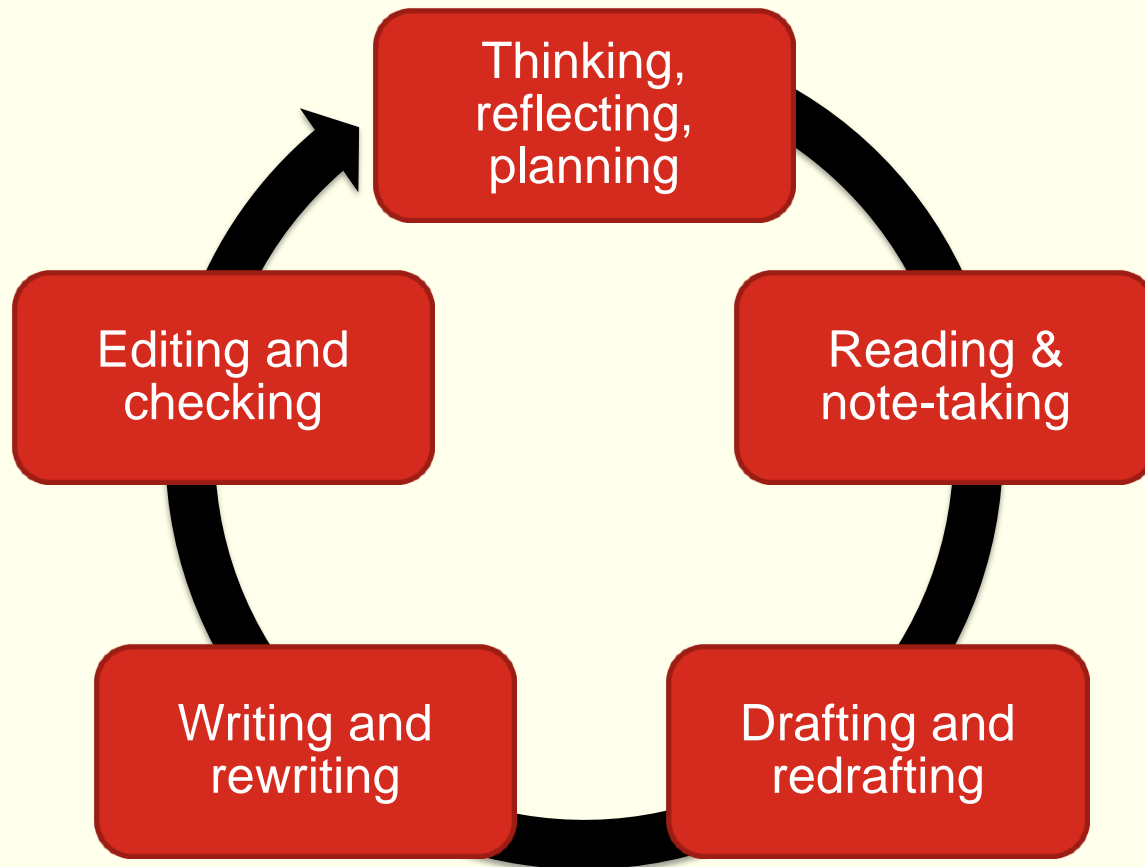
The Literature Review

There are four key elements to bear in mind when writing your Literature Review:

1. **Identifying the focus of the review** – this will be the general topic or subject area within which the problem or issue you are investigating is set;

2. **Selecting the appropriate sources** of information – texts and other references;

3. **Critically reviewing and evaluating (analysing)** the literature;

4. **Writing up the review (synthesising)** – the final element of bringing together the material you have gathered and producing a coherent justification for your research.

> You may like to attend the *AWL Open Workshop* **How To Write A Literature Review**.

The Literature Review Process

Thinking, reflecting, planning → Reading & note-taking → Drafting and redrafting → Writing and rewriting → Editing and checking → (cycle back to Thinking, reflecting, planning)

Features Of A Literature Review

Poor Literature Reviews	Good Literature Reviews
Confusing and wordy	Clear and concise
Is essentially an annotated bibliography	Synthesises available research
Use only a minimum amount of sources	Use a wide range of relevant, up-to-date sources
Only summarise the literature	Evaluates, compares, contrasts and comments on the literature where possible

Results

Writing your results should be (relatively) straightforward as the Results section is largely descriptive. However, it is useful to bear the following in mind:

— (Relatively) straightforward to write up

— Check them with your supervisor: nothing

— Make sure they fit with RQ, purpose, hypothesis/thesis

— Make sure they derive from your methods

Most common problem for students: results not relevant to the Research Question first posed!

Discussion

The Discussion is usually the longest and most critical / analytical part of your proposal. The Discussion:

— Is usually what your lecturers are most engaged by (and potentially where the marks are!)

— An opportunity to show how you think (an to be critical and analytical)

— The Sections and order are largely up to you (or your academic community's convention)

It can be useful to think of the Discussion as a 'mini-essay'. Write an assignment brief for yourself, covering your research question and the significance of the results you have outlined in the Results section

Discussion

Summarise the main findings:

— Do the results make sense, in terms of:

- your expectations (check thesis/hypothesis)
- what you read (your literature review)

— If your results agree with previous work, fine.

— If not, explain, or leave unresolved *"We cannot account for the …"*

Speculate about possible explanations for the findings:

— Mention limitations (shortcomings) of the research

— Sample size, of course, but what else? Problems with carrying out the method as originally planned? Not randomly chosen participants? Low response rate? Failure to look at a crucial time interval? Bias?

— Explore any unsettled points in results

Conclusions

Students often worry about writing their conclusions, but this fear can be misplaced. As long as you have given a clear Literature Review, Results and Discussion, the Conclusion shouldn't present an issues. Conclusions should:

— Re-state the <u>main purpose</u>:

- thesis / hypothesis / Research Question

— State whether or not the findings support them

- How and why? What does it all mean?

— Make <u>recommendations</u> and suggestions for future research.

- Be specific! *"If … were repeated, it should …"*

— Discuss the general and <u>practical implications</u>
of the findings:

- For professional, practical or industry practitioners

- For government policy, funding

- For academic communities

Top Tips

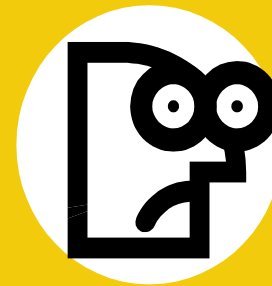When writing your Discussion and Conclusion, be aware of these pitfalls:
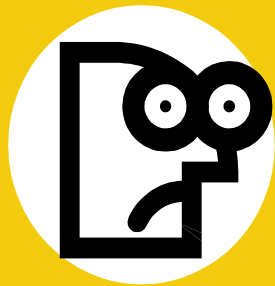
— Don't just repeat results

— Be flexible – how you arrange it reflects your thinking

— Most popular is to move simple to complex
(building up to the conclusion)

— Check conclusion is consistent with your RQ

— Emphasize what is new, different, or important

— Consider alternative explanations for your results

— Keep speculation relevant!

— Be careful with biased language or biased citation of previous work: use cautious language

Where now?

— Need more detailed assistance? <u>Book a tutorial</u>!

— Want feedback on a specific section? <u>Drop in to *Getting Your Assignment Ready*</u>!

— Want somewhere quiet to write, and get on the spot assistance? <u>Try The Writing Space</u>!

— Got a few quick questions? *AWL Office Hours* at [The Study Hub] are for you!

— *AWL Open Workshops* can be <u>booked here</u>!

- *Suggestions:*
  - How To Write A Literature Review
  - How To Write An Abstract
  - Writing Effective Paragraphs
  - Introduction To Dissertations
  - Advanced Dissertation Writing

Project Writing

It's QUESTION TIME!!