

How To Write a Good (no, Great) Ph.D. Dissertation !

Instructor: Dr. Alessia Paccagnini

Course Description

Good scientific writing is characterised by objectivity. This means that a paper must present a balanced discussion of a range of views . . . Moreover, value judgements, which involve moral beliefs of what is 'right' or 'wrong' must be avoided . . . The use of personal pronouns is unnecessary, and can lead to biases or unsupported assumptions. In scientific papers, therefore, personal pronouns should not be used. When you write a paper, unless you attribute an opinion to someone else, it is understood to be your own. Phrases such as 'in my opinion' or 'I think,' therefore, are superfluous and a waste of words . . . For the same reasons, the plural pronouns we and our are not used.
(Cited, with permission, from Smyth, 1996, pp. 2-3)

Write a Ph.D. Dissertation is not an easy job. Not only for choosing a good topic with convincing results and/or proofs, but also for selling an idea in the scientific community. Hence, to communicate in a successful way the conducted research, it is important to be able to write a (great) Ph.D. dissertation.

This writing aspect is sometimes forgotten, but to be clear, precise, and readable is essential in the publishing process for international journals. Writing skills are acquired by practice, for Ph.D. students and moreover for non-native English writers is not an easy issue.

The objective of this course is to improve the ability to produce, clear, precise and readable academic texts, such as Ph.D. dissertation and articles to be published in leading international journal.

The main points shown during the workshop are:

1. **From an idea to an article:** how a research idea can become an article or a Ph.D. dissertation chapter.
2. **Process writing:** defining the main contribution and the main motivation of a paper or/and a dissertation chapter
3. **Analysis of article sections:** review of the literature, methodology, empirical strategy
4. **Show and discuss results:** comments on results, tables, and graphs
5. **Introduction/Conclusion:** defining these two sections as the final part of writing
6. **Common errors:** a review of common errors of non-native English writers, focusing on the sentence structure
7. **Punctuation:** a focus on the use of commas, semicolons, colons, quotation marks
8. **Useful phrases and vocabulary:** a toolbox of common words and sentences used in economics
9. **Editing and improving a draft:** improve a paper in reading process
10. **Summing up articles for a Ph.D. dissertation:** wrap papers in a dissertation
11. **Sources and tips:** references, sources to improve writing, list of journals, publish strategies, review articles, and last general tips

Bibliography and References

1. Bailey Stephen, *Academic Writing, A practical guide for students*, Routledge Taylor&Francis Group, 2003
2. Bailey Stephen, *Academic Writing, A handbook for international students*, Routledge Taylor&Francis Group, 2011
3. Brimley Norris, Carolyn, *Academic Writing in English*, University of Helsinki, 2012
4. Cochrane, John, *Writing Tips for Ph.D. Students*, University of Chicago, 2005
5. Dudenhefer, Paul, *A Guide to Writing in Economics*, Duke University, 2009
6. Korner, Ann M., *Guide to Publishing a Scientific Paper*, Routledge Taylor&Francis Group, 2004
7. Harrison, Richard, *Headway Academic Skills: 3: Listening, Speaking, and Study Skills*, Oxford Press, 2011
8. Hartley, James, *Academic Writing and Publishing*, Routledge Taylor&Francis Group, 2008
9. McCarthy, Michael and Felicity O'Dell, *Academic Vocabulary in Use*, Cambridge Press, 2008
10. McCloskey, Deirdre, *Economical Writing*, Second Edition, Waveland Press, Inc., 1999
11. Neugeboren, Robert and Mireille Jacobson, *Writing Economics*, Harvard University, 2001
12. Oshima, Alice and Ann Hogue, *Writing Academic English*, Fourth Edition (The Longman Academic Writing Series, Level 4), Pearson Longman, 2006
13. Savage, Alice and Patricia Mayer, *Effective Academic Writing 2*, Oxford Press, 2005
14. Smyth, T. R., *Writing in psychology: A student guide*, New York: Wiley, 1996.
15. Swales John M. and Christine B. Feak, *Academic Writing for Graduate Students, 2d ed.: Essential Tasks and Skills (Michigan Series in English for Academic & Professional Purposes)*, The University of Michigan Press, 2009
16. Swales John M. and Christine B. Feak, *Commentary for Academic Writing for Graduate Students, 2d ed.: Essential Tasks and Skills (Michigan Series in English for Academic & Professional Purposes)*, The University of Michigan Press, 2009
17. Starkey, Lauren, *How to Write Great Essays*, LearningExpress, 2004
18. Thomson, William, *A Guide for Young Economist*, MIT Press, 2001