

THE DISSERTATION CHECKLIST

From How to Excel at a UK University, by Taiwo Oladokun. Print it. Live by it.

THE GAME

- ☐ Open the marking rubric before writing; turn the 70 column into a checklist.
- ☐ Underline the command verb; answer the question asked, not the topic.
- ☐ Read marks on the UK ladder: 62 is strong, 70 is the ceiling.
- ☐ Criticism beats description: weigh sources, take a position.

THE SETUP

- ☐ Topic passes four tests: finishable, data reachable, narrow, interesting.
- ☐ Three candidate topics with data sources to the first supervision.
- ☐ Plan backwards from the deadline; every stone gets a date.
- ☐ Ethics application goes in first; it is the slowest stone.

YOUR SUPERVISOR

- ☐ Bring questions and drafts, never apologies.
- ☐ Two-line summary email after every meeting.
- ☐ September deadline? Full draft to supervisor by mid July, before August leave.

THE CHAPTERS

- ☐ Literature review organised by themes, never by authors; it ends at your gap.
- ☐ Source grid built while reading; write down the column.
- ☐ Every method choice justified, never just described.
- ☐ Convenience sampling named honestly, limits owned.
- ☐ Findings organised by research question; every table gets a sentence.
- ☐ Discussion: every finding supports, contradicts, or adds to chapter two.
- ☐ Each research question answered in plain words.

THE CRAFT

- ☐ Every source recorded in full the day you first use it.
- ☐ Reference list reconciled both ways before submission.
- ☐ No contractions, no rhetorical questions, hedge where evidence is thin.
- ☐ AI may help you understand, never think; defend every sentence aloud.

WRITE LAST

- ☐ Introduction and abstract written from the finished work.
- ☐ Aim, questions, answers and conclusion match word for word.
- ☐ Recommendations only where your evidence can carry them.

THE FINAL TWO WEEKS

- ☐ Read-aloud edit, one chapter a day, pen in hand.
- ☐ Formatting from the handbook: title page, contents, numbering, appendices.
- ☐ No new sources, no panic rewrites; the cloth is woven.
- ☐ Final PDF opened on a second device; every figure checked.
- ☐ Submit early in the day; screenshot the confirmation; email it to yourself.
- ☐ Thank your supervisor; back up the whole project folder.

Free tools that run these steps for you: delightdataexploration.com/free-tools

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