

# TARA BRABAZON'S PHD

## SET UP DOCUMENT

How to commence a PhD with a flourish

How to finish with excellence and speed

# Introduction

Doctoral theses are successful through

- Planning
- commitment

If you hold these two characteristics, then you will be successful. The following pages serve as a guide to our first month of supervision.

Our aim is to plan, structure and organize the thesis. Once this process is completed, we will always have a sense of the overarching argument – why the thesis is being written – why it matters.

Thanks for joining me on this journey. Please print out the following pages. Spaces have been left for you to either type in your response, or hand write your response.

# Ten tips for supervisory time management

1. Make the first meeting count
2. Make the first year of the candidature count
3. Weekly meetings
4. Be consistent
5. Expect written work on a very regular basis
6. Be clear in determining student and supervisor responsibilities
7. Work hard in the summer
8. Intervene early if situations change
9. Build a community between scholars
10. Summon the 3Ms as a structure for your candidature. Mentoring, modelling and mirroring (each of these functions takes priority in a subsequent year.)



◆ List the ten major researchers in your field

◆ predict any analytical or methodological problems you may have completing your analysis

- ◆ what do you think is the strongest part of your investigation? (innovative arguments, source material, style of writing and structure... This point is your original contribution to knowledge.)

# Why are you doing a doctorate?

(List ten reasons. When the candidature gets tough – remember this list!)

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.

6.

7.

8.

9.

10.

# GETTING DOWN TO BUSINESS

The two most important elements in the construction of a strong PhD



a clearly presented thesis statement

a clearly presented structure

You have a task in the next few weeks. I want you to build on your provisional sections or chapters that you outlined so far in this document.

Now, confirm your structure and start to build an argument. In other words, for each of your chapters, I want you to list the 10 major points that you will argue or discuss. You may not need nine chapters – you may drop some through the process of writing. But at this stage, we are planning.

## **Why are we doing this?**

This exercise will keep you focussed on your overall project. There is nothing to stress about as you already have a provisional structure and a guideline of the major concerns in each chapter.



**What is your thesis statement?** (What is the argument/point you wish to make?)

**Why do I care – why is this topic worthy of investigation now?**  
(This section forms the basis of your conclusion!)

## **Chapter one – what ideas/sections do I want to deploy?**

## **Chapter two – what ideas/sections do I want to deploy?**

## **Chapter Three – what ideas/sections do I want to deploy?**

## **Chapter four – what ideas/sections do I want to deploy?**

## **Chapter Five – what ideas/sections do I want to deploy?**

## **Chapter six - what ideas/sections do I want to deploy?**

## **Chapter seven – what ideas/sections do I want to deploy?**



## **Chapter eight – what ideas/sections do I want to deploy?**

## **Chapter nine – what ideas/sections do I want to deploy?**

## PROBLEM TIME

One of the easiest ways to prevent problems is to predict them. We will now do a checklist of your current abilities and the skills we need to develop.

✚ Are you confident in your writing? Are there areas you would like to develop and improve?

✚ Are you confident in your research skills – do you know how to work the library and databases? Do you know how to get those abilities if you do not?

✚ Are you confident in your referencing skills?

✚ Are there technological skills you do not have, that you would like to develop?

✚ Are you confident in your time management? Do you understand the commitment – in time – required from a PhD? write down here when you will study and how you will clear this time.

# Specialist doctorate section – PhD by prior publication



Assemble the list of published articles  
on one page




Make sure all the publishing details are  
accurate and up to date




Write down the gaps. Your intro and outro will need to address these methodological / epistemological / ontological gaps



Write down eight headings that will form the spine of your synopsis



Collate your bibliography. Once assembled – look at your list. Are there absences or gaps? How will you handle these gaps in your intro and your outro?



Check that the thesis ‘hangs together.’ Make sure that the synopsis creates a unity to the disparate parts





Final check: What is the story you are telling?

## Specialist doctorate section – Creative-based doctorates

- ✚ Ensure a tight link between the creative works and the exegesis
- ✚ Show how the creative work furthers knowledge
- ✚ Demonstrate a strong grasp of the relevant literature. Examiners will read the exegesis first, and engage with the creative work second
- ✚ BE OVERT – make the link between ‘creativity’ and ‘research’ clear and precise. Creativity is not enough – it is not a doctorate. You must show the research in the creativity.

# Where to next?

The goal now is to write three chapters in the next six to nine months. Let's begin. List below your first five steps to write your first 1000 words.

1.

2.

3.

4.

5.