Planning Template 5:

Analysis process, identification of key themes

A big challenge when it comes to writing the dissertation is deciding what your analysis should look like and what you want to discuss in the final chapters. Whether you are doing a quantitative or qualitative project, deciding on how to present your data can be daunting. Chapters 13 and 14 talk you through the stages and ways to conduct this process, noting that this may differ depending on whether you are implementing an inductive or deductive approach.

**Regardless of your approach, organization is key.** Remember that in the book we noted that the process of analysis is often iterative and you have to go through cycles. A good start to the analysis process and identifying key themes in your findings might be to read through everything, or run your analysis and to **start clustering your findings together** according to themes or points of interest/contention. **After this, the next step is to return to your research questions**, utilizing these as a focal point for analysis. We have described the analysis process here in ‘rounds’, as thinking in this way and creating an order can be useful.

# Round 1: Creating themes and identifying points of interest

Getting started is the hardest part. Begin by looking at your data carefully and noting down in   
Table 1 some key themes of interest that emerge. For example, if this was a qualitative project, you could begin to put data that has a similar meaning or relates to each other together. This could be words, or quotes. Whilst you can of course expand this table to contain as many themes as you like, a top tip would be to think broadly at this point and explore nuance within themes later on.

## Table 1

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Theme 1** | **Theme 2** | **Theme 3** |
| **Theme 4** | **Theme 5** | **Theme 6** |

# Round 2: Finessing themes and digging a little deeper into analysis

Use this box to help you consider each theme in more detail. In Round 1 you have (probably) dumped lots of random words, quotes and ideas together. Now it is time to look at these together in more detail. Once you have addressed the first points in the box, finish by listing 3 key areas of interest relating to that theme in Table 2.

## Table 2

|  |
| --- |
| **Theme 1:**  **Key points?**  **Overlaps and repetitions**  **Points of conflict?**  **Does this data surprise me? Why?**  \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_  **3 key points of the theme which interest you most and why:**   1. … 2. … 3. … |

# Round 3: Returning to the Research questions

Use this table to write out your research questions again, reminding yourself of what   
these are! You have now identified some key themes in Rounds 1 and 2, so now it is time   
to consider how some of these can help you to address your research questions. As you are looking through your data again and your table from Round 1, start noting down key points relating to each question in Table 3.

## Table 3

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Research question** | **Data which relates to the question** |
| 1 |  |
| 2 |  |
| 3 |  |
| 4 |  |

# Round 4: Starting to make connections between your data and existing work

Further to this, it is important to begin to consider how the data connects to previous research, literature, or data. Use Table 4 to start finding those connections. To start off, look back at the tables you have already completed in Round 1 and 2, thinking about the parts of your data which have interested you most. Perhaps there have been some unexpected findings, or things that have frustrated you, if this is the case, then you might want to start with these.

## Table 4

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **My Data** | **What is it telling me and why is it interesting?** | **What has been said about this before?** | **What makes my data original or exciting?** |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

­