What do I need to do?

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| **Chapter 2: The Social Research Process** |
|  | Make sure you understand what we mean by the social research process, and what key characteristics make the knowledge produced by research more secure than common sense. |
|  | Think about what types of data you might like to work with. |
|  | Consider the type of research you find most interesting—descriptive, exploratory, or explanatory? |
|   | Think about ‘theories’ you are familiar with. How might they help inform your social research project or dissertation? |
| **Chapter 3: Getting Started** |
|  | Read the dissertation handbook to make sure you are familiar with your department’s requirements. |
|  | Decide on the subject area of your research, and establish your research aims and objectives. |
|  | Identify how you work best in terms of timing and location. |
|  | Construct a dissertation timetable to plan your project. |
|  | Develop writing strategies to assist you with getting started. |
|  | Establish the ‘ground rules’ of supervision with your supervisor once they are allocated. |
|  | Develop a ‘plan B’ in case there are unexpected developments in your dissertation. |
| **Chapter 4: Developing a Research Idea** |
|  | Make sure you understand the key issues related to research quality. |
|  | Identify your research interests. |
|  | Develop your ideas for research. |
|  | Sketch a research rationale. |
| **Chapter 5: Conducting a Literature Search** |
|  | Develop a literature searching strategy. |
|  | Carry out your literature search. |
|  | Change your approach depending on your results. |
|  | Identify key literature relating to your topic by recording your results appropriately. |
| **Chapter 6: Reviewing the Literature** |
|  | Make sure you understand the role of the literature review in the context of your dissertation or report. |
|  | Choose the most appropriate type of review for the purposes of your research. |
|  | Organize your literature thematically. |
|  | Plan your literature review. |
|  | Write the literature review. |
| **Chapter 7: Building your Project** |
|  | Make sure you understand the difference between a research strategy, a research design, and a research method. |
|  | Examine your research aims and decide what sort of strategies and designs might be suitable for your research. Think about the research methods that might follow on from those decisions. |
|  | Consider any methodological or practical issues associated with those strategies and designs that might limit your capacity to deliver the project on time. Factor this into your planned schedule. |
|  | Revisit your rationale for research and plan a research strategy and associated research design. |
| **Chapter 8: Ethics** |
|  | Familiarize yourself with your departmental ethics procedures. |
|  | Decide what ethical issues are relevant for your project. |
|  | Develop your informed consent form and information sheet. |
|  | Complete your ethics application and submit it to the ethical review committee. |
|  | Ensure that you make any changes resulting from the ethics review and adhere to the specifications of the approved ethics proposal. |
|  | Avoid any plagiarism and academic malpractice when writing your dissertation. |
| **Chapter 9: Writing a Research Proposal** |
|  | Make sure you understand your institutional requirements in relation to the proposal. |
|  | Check with your tutor, dissertation supervisor, or dissertation module coordinator (depending on university guidelines) that your dissertation topic appears viable. |
|  | Construct a well-organized and structured, well-articulated, coherent, doable, realistic, ethical, and original research proposal. |
|  | Ensure that you refer to your research proposal and aims and objectives when writing your dissertation. |
| **Chapter 10: Sampling** |
|  | Make sure you understand the different types of probability and non-probability sampling and consider which may be appropriate for your own research. |
|  | Identify the approaches that you will use to access your sample. |
|  | Develop strategies to increase your sample size if required. |
|  | Decide when ‘enough is enough’ in relation to your sample size and how this affects the generalizations that can be made from the data. |
| **Chapter 11: Collecting Quantitative Data** |
|  | Decide whether you are using primary or secondary data in your dissertation project. |
|  | Ensure your data collection clearly links to the rest of your dissertation. |
|  | Develop a carefully constructed questionnaire bearing in mind how the different levels of measurement affect the analysis. |
|  | Decide on the most appropriate way to administer your questionnaire and collect your data. |
|  | Prepare your data for analysis. |
| **Chapter 12: Collecting Qualitative Data** |
|  | Select the most appropriate method of qualitative data collection that will allow you to answer your research aims and objectives. |
|  | Use your research aims and objectives to develop your interview schedule or frames of interest. |
|  | Plan the process of your fieldwork, making sure you have given sufficient time to issues associated with accessing your field and actually collecting data. |
|  | Go out and collect the data, making sure a record is kept of the data collected. |
| **Chapter 13: Analysing Quantitative Data** |
|  | Decide whether quantitative analysis is appropriate for your project. |
|  | Plan your results in relation to your research aims and questions. This includes being able to:* identify when to use frequencies and/or proportions and how you can best present any results
* understand the different techniques of data visualization, and when and where to use them
* calculate measures of central tendency and measures of dispersion where necessary
* understand why you might make use of inferential statistics, including the different types that exist and where they might be appropriate
* analyse your results, linking your findings to your research questions and literature review.
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| **Chapter 14: Analysing Qualitative Data** |
|  | Make sure you understand the process of qualitative analysis—and where you are currently in your research. |
|  | Choose the most appropriate type of analysis with respect to your focus, your research aims, and your proposed methods of data collection. |
|  | Understand the key techniques needed to carry out your analysis. |
|  | Prepare your data for analysis. |
|  | Conduct your analysis—collecting further data where necessary! |
| **Chapter 15: Working with Documents** |
|  | Make sure you understand what sorts of documents might be suitable for a dissertation project, and how you might access them. |
|  | Understand the advantages of using documents, and how and where you might be positioned to make the most of those advantages. |
|  | Identify the approaches and methods of analysis associated with working with documents you could employ in your dissertation. |
|  | Consider your sample in the context of your research aim(s) and objectives. |
|  | Develop a coding schedule and code your data. |
| **Chapter 16: Evaluating your Project** |
|  | Make sure you understand the role of quality in the research process. |
|  | Answer the following:* Why was your project an interesting thing to do?
* What are the limitations of your methodology?
* Why are your findings important?
* What avenues for further research are suggested by your project?
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|  | Evaluate your project! |
| **Chapter 17: Writing up** |
|  | (Re)familiarize yourself with the institutional requirements regarding the structure and components of the dissertation. |
|  | Make sure that in your writing up you are addressing the aims and objectives of your dissertation. |
|  | Conform to the principles of academic writing. |
|  | Leave plenty of time to draft and redraft your dissertation, being aware that you are likely to need to cut words. |
|  | Get feedback on your dissertation from your supervisor, and make any necessary changes. |
|  | When it is ready, submit your dissertation in accordance with the guidelines. |

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