Master's Level 7 Dissertation Guidelines

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Avoiding Common Dissertation Mistakes

1. Causal Language in a Secondary Study
    a. “Impact of...”
    b. “Effect of...”
    c. “To what extent does...”
    d. “How does X improve Y?”
    e. “Influence of...”
    f. “Correlation over time...”

These may imply:

- Measurement
- Testing
- Statistical analysis
- Primary data

❌Avoid:
How does training improve performance?

✔ Acceptable:

What does existing literature suggest about the relationship between training and performance?

Avoiding Common Dissertation Mistakes

2. **Confusing Description with Critical Analysis**

Avoid the trap of descriptive writing by:

a. Summarising studies
b. Listing definitions
c. Reporting findings one by one

What is required for Level 7:

- Comparing studies
- Identifying contradictions
- Highlighting theoretical differences
- Discussing methodological weaknesses
- Identifying research gaps

❌Descriptive example:
Several studies show that flexible working reduces burnout (Taylor, 2019).

✔ Critical example:

Although several studies report that flexible working arrangements are associated with lower levels of burnout (Taylor, 2019; Green, 2020), other research suggests that remote work may intensify role ambiguity and boundary blurring, potentially increasing stress levels (Roberts, 2021). These conflicting findings suggest that certain factors may influence how strong the relationship is.

Avoiding Common Dissertation Mistakes

3. Scope Sometimes is Too Broad

Avoid:

a. Multiple HR practices
b. Multiple outcomes
c. Multiple industries
d. Multiple levels (individual + organisational + strategic)

Note:

Breadth weakens depth. A strong dissertation is focused and analytically deep, not wide and descriptive.

Avoiding Common Dissertation Mistakes

4. Methodological Confusion

Avoid:

a. Mentioning correlation
b. Mentioning comparison across organisations
c. Suggesting evaluation
d. Implying data collection

Avoiding Common Dissertation Mistakes

5. Referencing and Academic Writing

Avoid:

a. Inconsistent Harvard referencing
b. Informal tone
c. Website-heavy referencing
d. Over-reliance on reports vs peer-reviewed journals

Note:

At Master's level, peer-reviewed journal articles should dominate your literature review.

Reports (CIPD, WHO, etc.) should support discussion, not replace academic research.