

Tips for doctoral students and those who want to become doctoral students

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As with all major investments, when planning and writing a doctoral thesis, the likely expense and return should be considered as fully and carefully as possible.

From the multitude of calculations that have to be taken into account, the following considerations seem to me to be particularly important. For the sake of brevity, I will not concentrate on the phase of writing a dissertation, but on the planning, conception and induction phase. ...

1. Only aim for a dissertation if you can come up with **very good grades** in the academic discipline of your dissertation. A grade of "1.0" (very good, "A" grade) is an excellent starting prerequisite, "1.5" a very good one, and the grade should not be worse than "1.7" or in borderline cases "2.0".
2. If condition #1 is met: Only undertake the dissertation project if you can afford such a major project in terms of time, material and social **resources** - and if you have the necessary material resources (scholarship or equivalent) to do so.
3. Choose a **topic** that interests you deeply.
4. When choosing a topic and designing your project, make sure that this project is **well founded** both empirically and theoretically...
5. **Read** as much as you can on the subject, and do not forget to read as widely as possible from printed and, where appropriate, unprinted sources.
6. Read as far as possible **beyond the narrower edge of your topic** - often decisive suggestions come from neighbouring, sometimes from more distant, fields of research.
7. **Present** oral and written reports on the plan, status and further development of your project as often as possible - and train yourself in particular in the presentation of your project and its results or interim results in a concise and generally understandable way.
8. Like in a long-distance race, pay attention to the intermediate times, compare them with your (hopefully realistic) work plan and correct **the pace** if necessary.
9. Never lose sight of **the goal**: the dissertation must be written, preferably in no more than two years, and in such a way that the efforts are rewarded with a book publication and two journal articles.
10. **Use every free minute** in planning and writing the dissertation. You can continue writing footnotes and bibliographies even during the half-time break of a World Cup football match. Holidays are important, of course - however, ideally, you should take holidays *after* you have finished the dissertation. Calculated for a two-year dissertation period and based on the standard leave of a university employee, this would give you 60 additional working days, and if you also include Saturdays you would get another 12 days.

¹ Wolf, Frieder/Wenzelburger, Georg, 2010: Promotionsratgeber Politikwissenschaft. Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, p. 138 (translated)