

A framework for writing up your research

Parsell and Bligh (1999) summarise a typical structure of a journal article with the acronym SIMRAD:

Summary
Introduction
Methods
Results
Analysis
Discussion

Here, the SIMRAD framework is expanded to cover different written outputs:

Title – this should include a pithy version of the research question or issue under review/development

Summary – including an outline description of your research and the report (approximately 250 words)

Introduction – this aims to ensure that the reader understands the report. The research question (your aim) needs to be set out within the national, professional, organisational and/or educational background, setting the research in context. Include a resume of why the research/review is needed and how this relates to published work. You can include here a systematic review of the literature relating to your research, but be succinct and choose the references so that they relate directly to your report.

Some reports or dissertations will require a larger, separate literature review section.

Methods – this is a logical description of how you conducted your study, why you chose the methods you did, their relevance to the research question, topic and aims. This helps the reader decide on the validity of your research and conclusions. You need to describe the design of your study, research sample, instruments used, unanticipated occurrences and modifications made and how the data were analysed

Results – results need to be written up around the project aims or research question(s), should include mention of your sample groups and be presented in appropriate and interesting ways using tables, text, charts or diagrams.

Analysis – Use relevant statistical software and methods to analyse and identify significant findings from the research.

Discussion – This section is where you draw together the various threads from the literature and your own research. Begin with a summary of your main findings and then move into a comparative account of how your

research relates to that of others. Be critical of your methods, indicating where these could have been improved or enhanced. Indicate where further study or research is needed to explore questions raised by your work.

A useful framework for the discussion is 'Cubing' (considering a subject from six points of view):

- Describe
- Compare
- Associate
- Analyse
- Apply
- Argue for or against

Acknowledgements – acknowledge any individuals or organisations that have assisted with your work

References – note that referencing guidelines vary for different publications

Annexes – a short number of annexes if any, only selecting information that directly contributes to the report and without which the report does not make sense.