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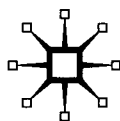
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# The Undergraduate Research Handbook

Gina Wisker

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## Glossary

### Abstract

This is more than a summary of the content of a dissertation, thesis, journal article, or other text; it lets a reader see what important contribution is being made by the research and written piece. The abstract is what is read first by a reader and so must be written clearly and in a straightforward and interesting manner so that they wish to read on. It should state the aims, outcomes and achievements of the dissertation or thesis (article or other), the theories used, the arguments, and the importance of its contribution to knowledge. Usually 300 words in length, it outlines the aim and focus of the study and it should identify, and answer, your main research question and sub-questions: 'What is this dissertation/thesis/research/essay about? What does it argue, prove, suggest?' 'What has it achieved of importance?' It should be written in the third person and in passive tone, for example, 'It is argued that . . .' 'In discussing . . .' 'Using . . .' 'Evidence is presented which suggests that . . .'. You will probably write the abstract right at the end of your work and after you have written everything else, when you can stand back and get a clear picture of your achievement. If published, the abstract along with complete reference details and key words are stored in abstracting and indexing services in libraries and archives so that they can be searched electronically.

### Action research

This is a form of applied research and practitioner research in which researchers incorporate the participants in the design of the study, the process of investigation and the implementation of the findings (as collaborators). It feeds back to the participants and it engages the management and the whole organisation in the study (in a partnership) in the reflection and the changes related to the research process and outcomes. It is a way of modelling the next stage of the research. It involves reflective practice, reflection and innovation. Action research seeks to implement change, for example in policy, through the research itself. It also encourages the development of those involved.

### Bias

Any influence that systematically distorts the results of a research study produces bias. It will obscure the true nature of what is being studied, and may be caused by the researcher or by the procedures for collecting data, including sampling. A reflexive account of the research can address the issues of trust that the existence of bias highlights. Subjectivity exists in both social science and 'pure' science research, although we should always try to acknowledge and reduce it. It is clearly present in research methodology that relies on the construction of knowledge, where it is acknowledged that the