

# ACE Introduction to the Major Project Quick Guide

## What is a Major Project?

A major project is an **extended report that addresses a specific, meaningful research question or challenge in the workplace.**

Whilst the length and requirements of major projects necessarily vary between disciplines, you will be expected to:

1	Formulate a research question or problem statement which concisely outlines the project's <b>aims, objectives, and scope.</b>
2	Conduct primary and secondary <b>research independently</b> , evaluating the potential validity, coherence, or usefulness of this evidence.
3	Justify the suitability of your <b>methodology</b> – including your approach to data collection and analysis – with reference to scholarly literature.
4	Develop significant <b>findings</b> and / or <b>recommendations for practice</b> based on your analyses.
5	Present your arguments <b>clearly</b> and <b>sequentially</b> , demonstrating their relevance to the project's aims, objectives, and scope.

(Adapted from University of Reading, 2025)

## Formulating a Research Question

Your proposed study should offer an original contribution to the existing research, providing an opportunity to **explore your organisation at a higher, strategic level.** As such, you may find it helpful to consider emerging trends or issues in the wider sector alongside your own interests, experiences, and aspirations.

Once your topic has been approved by your project supervisor, you can begin to develop a research question. Your research question should be **focused, relevant, and manageable.** It will necessarily include the following information:

- The **topic** to be investigated.
- Your 'thesis' – **what you intend to prove** or disprove.
- The **limitations** of your research – what will be excluded from the study.

For example: **How does leadership style impact employee satisfaction and retention in NHS England?**

The [ACE Quick Guide to Writing a Research Question](#) includes further advice on identifying a topic through research, assessing the feasibility of a proposed study, and narrowing the scope of a question.

## The Structure of a Major Project

You should first **check the assignment brief or contact your project supervisor regarding programme-specific requirements.**

However, major projects typically include variations of the following chapters:

### 1. Introduction

Your introduction should:

- Provide relevant background information and **context**, using literature to explain the **rationale** behind and **value** of your study.
- Establish the **scope** of the research question or problem you intend to address, communicating the project's **aims** and **objectives**.
- Indicate the **structure** of your report, enabling the marker to anticipate the trajectory of your argument.

(Adapted from Sheffield Hallam University, 2025a)

### 2. Literature Review

The aim of a literature review is to **identify and discuss scholarly literature relevant to your dissertation topic** and research questions. You are required to demonstrate an understanding of how your project builds upon existing research in your field, **evaluating its strengths and limitations**. It is often organised thematically by **grouping related studies**.

The ACE Quick Guides to [Conducting a Literature Review](#) and [Writing a Literature Review](#) include further advice on how to structure your work, adopting a critical approach.

### 3. Methodology

The purpose of a methodology is **to explain and justify your approach to data collection and analysis** – considering the strengths and limitations of your chosen techniques in practice.

You should therefore address the two following questions, considering your **research philosophy** and relevant **scholarly literature**:

1. Why did you select this approach over potential alternatives?
2. Why is this the most suitable approach in the context of your research aims and objectives?

For simple definitions of key terms and additional information, see the [Methodology Term Buster](#) and [ACE Quick Guide to Writing a Methodology](#).

(Adapted from Sheffield Hallam University, 2025b)

#### 4. Results

The results chapter **presents and describes the findings** of your research, including tables and figures – where appropriate – to **exemplify trends and anomalies**.

In quantitative studies, the results chapter presents the findings alone, without interpretation.

In qualitative studies, results are often integrated with the analysis as the data is difficult to present meaningfully without interpretation.

(Adapted from Sheffield Hallam University, 2025c)

#### 5. Analysis / Discussion

Your analysis will **interpret the findings** of your research using an **appropriate theoretical framework** – evaluating their validity, coherence, or usefulness.

It should therefore consider the following:

1. What are your major findings? How do they **contribute towards your understanding of the research problem or question**?
2. Do your findings support or challenge the existing literature? You should **compare your study with those included in your literature review**.
3. What are the possible **alternative interpretations** of your data?
4. Are there any **anomalies** or **unexpected findings**? If so, it is important to explain why they might have occurred.
5. Were there any **factors that affected or limited** your findings? Are there any **new or unanswered questions**? Briefly indicate what future studies could do to resolve the problem or answer the question.

You must assess both the strengths of your findings and the limits of their **applicability in the organisational context**, including **the extent to which your aims and objectives have been achieved**.

#### 6. Findings and Recommendations

The findings and recommendations chapter will **state the conclusions** of your research, outlining **what has been learnt** as a result of your project; this is your opportunity to highlight the significance of its contribution to knowledge, discuss the **potential wider implications**, and offer **recommendations for future practice**.

## Managing a Major Project

As you research, plan, write, and edit your major project, you will need to manage your resources and self-directed learning time effectively – breaking each process down into **small, manageable sub-tasks**. You can use the following tips to inform your approach:



Employ one – or more – of the techniques included the [ACE Quick Guide to Assignment Planning](#) to outline your major project, **dividing each chapter into relevant headings and sub-headings** based on the requirements of the brief.



Produce an **indicative timeline for completion** well in advance of the deadline. You can use an [Assignment Calculator](#) or AI tool to streamline this process, establishing '**soft deadlines**' for planning, research, writing, and editing!



Set yourself [SMART goals](#) and dedicate a **realistic** amount time each week to accomplishing them, factoring in any commitments at work and at home. You can subsequently use the ACE [Weekly](#) and [Daily](#) Planning Templates or block out time in your electronic calendar to **organise your self-directed learning** and **track your progress**.



**Save your academic resources in a centralised location** and take **detailed notes** as you read so you can refer back to them as necessary. You may find it helpful to use the [ACE Quick Guide to Creating a Literature Review Reading Log](#) and accompanying [Word](#) or [Excel](#) Templates to formalise your approach to organising and critically evaluating the research.

## Reference List

Sheffield Hallam University (2025a) *Introduction*. Available at: <https://libguides.shu.ac.uk/researchprojects/introduction> (Accessed: 7 April 2026).

Sheffield Hallam University (2025b) *Methodology*. Available at: <https://libguides.shu.ac.uk/researchprojects/methodology> (Accessed: 7 April 2026).

Sheffield Hallam University (2025c) *Results*. Available at: <https://libguides.shu.ac.uk/researchprojects/results> (Accessed: 7 April 2026).

University of Reading (2025) *Dissertations and Major Projects: Planning Your Dissertation*. Available at: <https://libguides.reading.ac.uk/dissertations/planning> (Accessed: 7 April 2026).



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