



Turning your Masters' Dissertation into a Camtree Research Report

If you have successfully completed a Masters' level dissertation, then, *congratulations!* This is a great achievement, and we are pleased that you are considering sharing your work by publishing with Camtree.

This guide will help you to:

- Decide whether Camtree is the right outlet for your work.
- Understand how you might adapt your dissertation for publication with Camtree.

It also includes the transcript of an interview with the author of a research report derived from a Masters' dissertation in which they discuss their experiences of writing their report.

First, the questions that we are asked most often:

Is Camtree the right place for my work?

Camtree publishes reports of *close-to-practice research*. So, if your dissertation study involved inquiry into existing educational practice or changes to practice, and generated insights that have implications for practice (your own or that of others) or have changed the way you teach something), then we would like to hear from you. Camtree publications range from small-scale inquiries in your own educational setting; collaborative inquiries by groups of educators; larger studies of educational initiatives or innovations; and more expansive projects involving educator communities and wider networks.

Does Camtree specify any particular research approach?

We don't specify any particular methodology or research design: small scale interventions and experiments, evaluations, lesson studies, learning studies, action research, action learning activities, and case studies (and others) are all in scope for Camtree. However, we don't currently publish literature reviews, 'desk-based' or library studies, or opinion pieces.

Can Camtree publish my dissertation as it stands?

Yes, we can. But it will need to be accompanied by a research report of 2000-5000 words which is aimed at educators, and which highlights implications for educational practice. Alternatively, you can publish just a research report.

Is my report reviewed before publication?

All reports published by Camtree go through peer review. However, if you were enrolled on a Masters' programme at a Camtree partner organisation, then the assessment of your dissertation may form part of the review process. Camtree will still carry out some checks and you may receive additional feedback and advice, and be asked to make some revisions, prior to publication of the research report.

From dissertation to report

Masters' dissertations are often more than 10,000 words in length or even up to 25,000 words in some cases. They are also, of course, written to show examiners that you have the depth and breadth of knowledge required for the award of a Masters' or 'Level 7' degree. This means that most Masters dissertations include a literature review, a discussion of relevant theories, detailed presentation of methodology, ethical framework, and research design even if their focus is an aspect of practice.

Research reports published by Camtree, however, have a different emphasis. While they should be informed by existing literature and theoretical perspectives, their primary readership is *other educators* (not examiners!), and their purpose is to present new knowledge with the potential to *improve practice*. So, writing a research report based on a dissertation is not just a matter of cutting out words: it involves reflecting on *audience* and *purpose* and reworking the dissertation accordingly.

While producing a research report involves additional work, it means that what you learned during your dissertation will reach a wider audience and, potentially, inform and change their practice.

Jamie Linale, who published a research report based on his dissertation, describes how:

"It's worth it to find that time to do it. It does help you. I think, in a sense, it forces you to focus on being reflective and how you're doing your teaching. We can all learn from each other and the practice we have in our classroom and whether they're effective: "Could I translate that into my classroom?"

You can read an interview with Jamie about his experience of writing his report later in this document, and you can find his report in the Camtree Digital Library.

Using the Camtree report template

Camtree research reports are based on templates. These include suggested structures and section headings, as well as guidance and prompts which will help you with the actual report writing process.

We have a template (the 'Masters-to-Report' version), specifically to help with the translation of dissertations into reports. This contains advice as to the parts of your dissertation that you could usefully exclude or reduce, and those where you might need to add further detail.

What makes a great report – and a few things to avoid

The most publishable reports include the following.

- A clear statement of the reason, stimulus or starting point for the inquiry. For example, whether it was inspired or framed by your own observations or interests, by patterns in existing data, or by a question raised by your reading of prior research.
- 'Positioning' of the research in relation to prior research or a theoretical framework. As Jamie Linale says in his interview, you don't need to discuss all the possible theoretical frameworks or research approaches (as you might have done in your dissertation); state those that you used and what they provided in framing and guiding your inquiry.
- Rather than a full literature review, present instead selected sources that have really informed your choices of topic, methodology, or the framework you have used for analysis or interpretation.
- *Brief* quotations or summaries of other sources, rather than extended excerpts or paraphrases. For example: "As Yin (1987) says, case study research is an appropriate approach when 'how' and 'why' questions are being posed." There's no need in a Camtree research report for a lengthier definition of case study.
- An outline of the ethical framework that informed your inquiry: if you used the British Educational Research Association or American Educational Research Association ethical framework, you should state this. Also, summarise ethical practices that ensured the success of the inquiry, and which should be considered by others carrying out the same kind of inquiry. For example: who were the main 'stakeholders' in your inquiry (pupils, colleagues, educators, parents) and how did you make sure that their interests were protected?
- Clear links between evidence collected, the interpretation or analysis you offer, and any claims or recommendations that you make. For the research report, you may find that

presenting findings in summary form (using bullet points or tables) allows you to focus on those with clear implications for practice.

- A summary of what you believe to be important or novel, about your research and how your findings can be translated into something tangible from which others can learn and even try themselves. If possible, give examples of how you or your colleagues are putting to use what you found.
- Reflections on your approach: rather than writing a formal account of limitations and what you could have done differently (as might have been required in your dissertation) instead focus on practical advice which will guide and support other educators (your readers) in undertaking similar inquiries.

User testing!

I needed to keep ... highlighting the relevance to someone's practice: immediate, direct practice. You need to really tell a practitioner: "Why would you need to use this? Why is this relevant to you?". It's almost like you're trying to convince them to buy your product. (Jamie Linale, Interview)

The best way to check if you have written your report in a way that will inform practice more widely is ... to ask some other educators what they think. Share your report with colleagues and ask them for feedback. If they know you've recently completed a dissertation, they may be more willing to read a concise account with a focus on implications for practice, than a full-length dissertation!

What did other teachers take from your report? What elements might they apply in their own practice? What information did they think is superfluous or too theoretical? Where did they think you should include examples or practical advice? Does your report 'sell' your inquiry, your findings, and the changes you suggest are made to practice?

Don't take suggestions for improvements as criticism. The purpose of this exercise, as with any peer review, is to *improve the work*.

Next steps

- Read Jamie Linale's interview on the following pages.
- Look at the Camtree 'Masters-to-Report' template, paying particular attention to the advice and guidance in each section. Think about how your dissertation might translate into a report like this. But remember that this template is only a guide, and if the research design or approach you used doesn't align exactly with it, you can add sections. But do always keep that focus on *implications for practice* in mind.

From Dissertation to Report: An Interview with Jamie Linale

Jamie Linale recently completed his MA in Education at the University of Cambridge Faculty of Education. He wrote a research report for Camtree based on his dissertation, and in this interview with Alison Twiner (Camtree Researcher) he talks about the process, identifies some challenges he faced, and offers some advice to the writers of research reports.

You can read Jamie's report in the Camtree library: <https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14069/33>

Alison: *Jamie, can you tell me about the research around which your Master's thesis was based?*

Jamie: I work in a primary Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) which is a type of alternative provision where students go if and when they're excluded from school: it's an alternative to mainstream. The work I did was on construction-based structured play for the teaching and learning of the language of metacognition. I used construction activities like Lego and then some resources that I designed to help students. If you want to explicitly teach metacognition, it's useful to have a shared language, so the idea was to introduce students to a language of metacognition, but using play, so it was engaging.

Alison: *What was your process to go from your Masters' thesis of 15000-20000 words to a 2000-5000-word report for Camtree for a practitioner audience?*

Jamie: I always write way too much: I did that for the thesis as well. I always find it a difficult process to get word counts down. I found the best way to do it was I would go through and find what I thought were the least important points and then remove those and then go back again and find the next least important points of what's left and take those out. And then so by the end of it, you've condensed it down to just what is the most, what you think are going to be the most important points to make. I got a lot of help from other people saying, "You know, this is not as important as maybe you think it is." It's a kind of constant revision: "maybe I don't need to bring up policy issues here?", or "I don't need to point out that there are other theories". And then go back and do that again and again.

Alison: *And picking specific areas of the literature rather than the long literature review that you did for your Masters'. Is that an area you worked on to condense?*

Jamie: Yes, so, in the Masters', a big part of it is the epistemology stuff. You don't need to include all of that background detail. You have all these nuances and these caveats to what

you're saying and "this is a theory, but there are other theories." And you feel the need to mention all of these things.

I removed the background stuff on engagement, where there were these theories of how you come to arrive at indicators of engagement. All you really need for a practitioner report is: what are the indicators of engagement?

Alison: *What did you see as the key elements you did need to retain for a practitioner report?*

Jamie: One of the main things was direct relevance to the classroom, particularly for mine, because mine was about activities that you do in the classroom. I felt the elements I needed to keep were highlighting the relevance to someone's practice: immediate, direct practice. So, for example, in a PRU, a key focus is reintegration and achieving academic outcomes similar to mainstream. So, I would say, "These kinds of activities, if you teach students metacognition you can support the integration, you can support students achieving academic outcomes similar to mainstream". You need to really tell a practitioner: "Why would you need to use this? Why is this relevant to you?". It's almost like you're trying to convince them to buy your product. They're like: "I've got limited number of lessons. Why would this be useful to me?".

Alison: *What did you find most difficult about the process?*

Jamie: You don't want to commit to just trying to convince people, you know: "this is the best way to do it." You want to say: "Well, it might work in this context. It might not work in this context". And so, in your own mind, it's, it feels incomplete, and it feels like you're not telling everyone the whole story. And that's the bit I found difficult because I really wanted to say, "be careful here" or "maybe the research isn't as strong on this point". So, I found out the most difficult bit was, where you want to justify yourself a little bit, but you don't have the space to do so.

Alison: *If it is a 'quick read' that you're writing, it needs to be that punchier version of the longer version; so, what may feel incomplete to you may actually be a really nice presentation of highlights for someone else.*

Jamie: Yes. And I think, going back to that sales analogy, where if you're trying to sell it to a practitioner, you want to say it works. It works here and here and here. And this is good. And this is great. You don't want to say "Well, actually, you know, this product might not be ..." It's getting to the point of why you think your research is relevant.

Alison: *And what did you learn about your work or about the process by working on this, this report that was in a different frame and a different word count and a different audience to your thesis?*

Jamie: Part of it for me was just a process of revisiting it. So, I did my Masters; then I went back to teaching and then it's very easy to fall into a routine of just going back to your traditional way of teaching. Going back to look at my research again, it reminded me, actually, I quite like this! I think this could work in my classroom. I think this is useful and it gives you that bit of motivation to actually say, with a little bit of effort, I can. It's easy to compartmentalize doing a Masters' as if this research has got nothing to do with being in the classroom, which is not true, you know? So, I've done my Masters', now I'm going back to teaching. I did classroom practice, I did classroom activities, and I can actually use this in my actual classroom.

Alison: *What advice might you give to others who might be thinking about taking their thesis and trying to produce a similar practitioner report?*

Jamie: I would say it's definitely worth it. I had the issue that I'm working full time and trying to do the report as well, sometimes it felt like: I *will* find time to do this. So, it requires a little bit of extra effort. And I would say to anyone else who's thinking, well, I don't know if I'm going to have time:. It's worth it to find that time to do it. It does help you. I think. In a sense, it forces you to focus on being reflective and how you're doing your teaching. So, although it's a little bit of extra effort, it's definitely worth it for that.

As teachers, it's really useful to all of us to share our practice and share our research, as a community. There's lots to learn about teaching and teaching practice. I found it really difficult to find research about alternative provision, and if there's anyone else out there who is interested in doing research, it would be great for them to share it, because that way I've got other people to learn from. We can all learn from each other and the practice we have in our classroom and whether they're effective: "Could I translate that into my classroom?"

So, I would hope that maybe my report would be of use to someone and that might become a feature of their practice, and it might help them, and help their students. And so yes, I would encourage people as much as possible that if you think you've got something worth sharing to definitely put in the effort, so it can benefit all of us really.

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