

Joe,

You've got a solid start: you already have a topic in mind, some exposure to the literature, and basic confidence in research design at doctoral level. That's a good platform. At the same time, a few practical gaps are visible that you should tackle early so your project does not stall — most importantly, confirming whether a genuine research gap exists and strengthening your literature base and writing. I'll keep this direct and practical.

Strengths

- You have a clear topic idea and you know your general area.
- You understand research design basics and feel confident about methodology foundations.
- You have read peer-reviewed journal articles rather than only textbooks or summaries.
- You already have some support network and access to resources.

Areas for improvement

- Uncertainty about an actual research gap is the top risk for a doctoral project.
- Literature engagement is light for doctoral level; “a handful” of articles is not enough to map the field.
- Academic writing repeatedly causes problems or feedback, which will slow progress if not addressed.
- You've only skimmed university briefing documents, so procedural requirements and deadlines may catch you out.
- Support is present but not structured, so you might lack regular direction.

Recommendations

1. Prioritize a focused literature gap analysis: do systematic searches, use a reference manager, build an annotated bibliography and a concept map to show where gaps exist. Talk this to your supervisor and a subject librarian early.
2. Turn your topic into 2–3 clear research questions and a short proposal (1,000–1,500 words) to test feasibility.
3. Tighten writing habits: join a writing group or book a writing tutor/workshop, aim for short, regular writing sprints with feedback.
4. Review university requirements now: ethics, format, milestones, submission rules. Put key dates in a simple timeline.



5. Set structured support: schedule regular supervisor meetings, and arrange method/statistics consultation if needed.

You're on the right track and you can close these gaps without dramatic changes. Start with the literature gap check and a short proposal — that will clarify everything else. I'm confident you can get this into a strong, manageable plan.

Best Regards,

Grad Coach

*Keep in mind that this report is generated based on your survey responses alone and therefore has its limitations. For hands-on help, please [book a free consultation here](#).