History Dissertation Structure

Dissertation topic
- Is the topic clear and well defined? Does it involve a problem, question, or hypothesis that sets the agenda and points precisely to what needs to be explored or discovered?
- Is the topic of genuine relevance or interest? Does it pick up on important or interesting themes or subjects arising from your studies?

Literature review
The literature review should provide a critically appraised context for your studies, ask yourself:
- Have you accessed the most recent literature of relevance to your topic, as well as classic sources?
- Do you refer to major books, articles, artefacts? How do you arrange these?
- Does the literature review hang together, to show how the ideas and findings have developed, or is it merely a shopping list of books and articles?
- Is the review critical? Does it briefly evaluate, showing how your dissertation fits into what is mistaken or lacking in other studies?

Critical underpinnings
Be clear about your approach.
- Are you asking yourself a key question, presenting a thesis, or defending a statement?

Method
Consider two chief criteria:
- Methods work if they provide a persuasive response to your question, positive or negative. Is your choice of methods and research techniques well suited to the kind of problem you are studying?
- Have you clearly communicated a description of the methods you have adopted?

Results
- Have you provided enough evidence to make a convincing case?
- Have you presented everything directly relevant to the question in such a way that the reader doesn't have to flip back and forth to make her or his own connections?
- Are results or findings clearly and accurately written, easy to read, grasp and understand?
- Are your findings faithful to what you actually found – do you claim more than you should?

Conclusions
Findings don't speak for themselves – they need to be analysed.
- Have you explained what your findings mean and their importance, in relation to theory and practice?
- What should we do with your findings and conclusions? What do they imply?