

## Guidelines for M.Sc. Dissertation Students

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### General

- Submission Date: 11<sup>th</sup> September 2020
- All students please read the dissertation guidelines carefully
- Please be aware of any additional advice given to you regarding the dissertation process for 2020 in the light of the impact of Covid 19

### Objective of the Dissertation

- To help you discipline your views
- To help you acquire research skills
- To enable you to present your views in a logical, rational, clear and unbiased manner

### Key Issues

- Make sure the subject has analytical potential
- Develop a logical and structures argument rather than providing a purely descriptive, dull text
- Outlines your assumptions, questions or hypotheses and confirm / reject / answer as appropriate
- Use secondary data / information
- Make sure that the title is clearly defined and concise, not broad and vague
- Length
  - ~~15,000~~ 12,000 words
  - +/- 10% (i.e. ~~13,500 – 16,500 words~~) (i.e. 10,800 - 13,200 words)

### Typical Dissertation Structure

- Preamble Sections
- Introduction
- Theory / historical perspective / big picture chapter dependent on subject
- Core chapters / Discussion
- Conclusion

### Preamble Sections

- Disclaimers
- Abstract
- Acknowledgements
- Index
- List of Figures
- List of Tables
- List of Abbreviations

### Introduction

- Approx. 7% of word limit
  - ~~Approx. 1,000 words~~
  - (2019/2020 approx. 850 words)
- Include:
  - Aims of the dissertation
  - Methodology – this should explain approach, detail materials used e.g. books, articles, secondary sourced data, difficulties encountered in process of collecting data
  - Structure – this should explain briefly what is in each chapter

### Theory / Historical perspective / Big picture (Ch. 2)

- Approx. 20% - 25% of total words
  - ~~Approx. 3,000 – 4,000 words~~
  - (2019/2020 - 2,400 – 3,000 words)
- Usually a background chapter providing a theoretical framework / historical perspective / global setting according to the subject
- Divide the chapter into subsection according to the needs of the analysis

### Core chapters (Ch. 3 and Ch. 4)

- Approx. 20% - 25% of total words per chapter
  - ~~Approx. 3,000 – 4,000 words~~
  - (2019/2020 – each chapter 2,400 – 3,000 words)
- These should provide more original content than background material
- Do not fall into trap of more general discussion detailing literature
- Try to use one chapter to present results of research
- Try to use one chapter to discuss / preach the main points / arguments of the thesis

### Conclusion (Ch. 5)

- Approx. 10% of total words
  - ~~Approx. 1,500 words~~
  - (2019/2020 – 1,200 words)
- Summarise findings
- Offer analysis based on what you have discovered
- Make sure arguments are adequately supported – e.g. don't argue one way in body of dissertation and then provide opposing conclusions
- Make sure you answer questions / prove – disprove hypotheses etc.

### References / Tables / Figures

- Record all references and use a system that allows you to keep track of them
- Create Tables / Figures from the data you have collected. Ensure these are also referenced
- Cutting / Pasting Figures / Tables is often not appropriate or the most useful way of presenting material

### References / Tables / Figures

- Reference all material / data that you use within the dissertation using Cardiff Harvard
- e.g.
- Pettit SJ,. 2020. How to write a dissertation, *Journal of Dissertation Writing* 6 (3), pp. 20 - 40

### Appendices

- Questionnaire
- Ethics Form
- Dissertation Proposal

### Questionnaires / Interview Schedule

- Ethical approval must be obtained
- Clear all questionnaires / interview questions with supervisor before submitting for ethical approval
- Include copy of original questionnaire / questions in Appendix
- You do not need to include copies of all responses

### Ethics

- Ethics 0 – secondary sourced data only
- ~~Ethics 1 – primary data collected through questionnaires / interviews~~
- (2019 / 2020) – only secondary material to be collected so only Ethics 0

### English / Grammar / Spelling

- Check use of English / Grammar / Spelling prior to submission
- It is not the role of the supervisor to correct text – advice is given
- It is not the role of the supervisor to proof read your dissertation – if English is not your first language please ask an English speaker to read your dissertation

### Plagiarism

- Will not be tolerated
- Will likely result in failure
- To ensure you do not plagiarise reference all material
- If you use direct quotations from other work ensure that it is encapsulated by “speech marks” and also referenced

### Tips 1

- Do:
  - Time manage (very important) – You only have a around 12 weeks to complete the dissertation
  - Submit chapters for feedback as you write them
  - Contact supervisor if you are having difficulties
  - Read through work before submitting
  - Start working on dissertation in June
  - Finish dissertation by end of August to allow time for finalising / dealing with any outstanding issues

### Tips 2

- Do not:
  - Submit a descriptive text
  - Do not copy from journals
  - Spend valuable time chasing data you are not going to obtain
  - Hand entire dissertation to supervisor at the end of August for feedback – it is unlikely that you will receive any
  - Send rude emails to supervisor
  - Email chapters to supervisors, hard copy is preferred

### Suggested Timetable

- June – Ch. 1
- July – Chs. 2 and 3
- August – Chs. 4 and 5
- September – Final Editing

### Final Submission

- 1 copy of the dissertation is required:
  - ~~1 bound copy~~
  - 1 electronic copy
  - Ensure all information is included name, student no., etc.

### Supervisor availability

- You will be advised of availability on an ongoing basis either at individual meetings or by email
- If you make an appointment please turn up or make alternative arrangements prior to meeting
- Suggested number of meetings is 5, this is not a fixed number, more can be held if necessary
- Supervisors have holidays, these can be worked around

### Good Luck

- Don't just aim to pass
- Aim for a distinction level dissertation