



**Prifysgol Cymru**  
Y Drindod Dewi Sant  
**University of Wales**  
Trinity Saint David

**Institute of Inner-City Learning**  
**London Campus**

## **Master of Business Administration**

### **LCMB7035 - Dissertation**

## **Dissertation Structure**

### **Introduction**

An MBA dissertation is a substantial, independent research project undertaken toward the end of an MBA programme. It allows students to apply business theories and analytical tools to a real-world issue or strategic question. The dissertation typically explores a specific management or organisational challenge, combining academic rigour with practical relevance. It demonstrates your ability to conduct research, critically evaluate evidence, and offer insights that contribute to both theory and practice. Whether focused on marketing, finance, leadership, or operations, the dissertation is a capstone that showcases your intellectual maturity and readiness for strategic decision-making in business environments.

### **How to develop the dissertation**

Developing an MBA dissertation begins with selecting a focused, relevant topic aligned with your interests and career goals. Conduct a thorough literature review to identify gaps and formulate clear research questions or hypotheses. Choose a suitable methodology—quantitative, qualitative, or mixed—and justify your approach. Collect and analyse data systematically, ensuring ethical standards are met. Structure your dissertation into coherent chapters: introduction, literature review, methodology, data analysis, discussion, and conclusion. Throughout, maintain academic rigour, link findings to theory and practice, and reflect on limitations. A well-developed dissertation not only answers your research questions but also contributes meaningful insights to the business field.

# **The dissertation structure**

1. Title Page
2. Declaration
3. AI use Acknowledgements
4. Acknowledgements
5. Abstract
6. Table of Contents
7. List of Figures and Tables
8. List of Abbreviations
9. Glossary
10. Introduction
11. Literature Review
12. Research Methodology
13. Data Analysis
14. Discussion
15. Conclusion
16. Reference list
17. Appendices

# The dissertation structure clarification

## Title Page

**What it is:** The Title Page is the formal cover of the dissertation. Please review the assessment brief to ensure the required information is provided. Usually, it displays the University's logo, the name of the programme, the title of your research project, your name, student ID, course title, the name of your supervisor, the word count, and the date of submission.

**How to develop:** Choose a title that is clear, specific, and reflects the scope of your study. Avoid vague or overly complex phrasing. Ensure formatting follows any official template and proofread carefully—errors here set the wrong tone.

## Declaration

**What it is:** This is a formal statement affirming that the dissertation is your original work and that all sources have been appropriately cited. It is a safeguard against academic misconduct and demonstrates ethical integrity.

**How to develop:** Please use the provided declaration form. Make sure to include your signature and date.

## AI use Acknowledgement

**What it is:** This is a formal statement that clarifies how you used AI in your work.

**How to develop:** Please use the provided acknowledgement form.

## Acknowledgments

**What it is:** This section gives you the opportunity to thank those who supported you during your research. Common acknowledgements include supervisors, academic staff, family members, friends, and research participants.

**How to develop:** Keep it professional and heartfelt. Acknowledge contributions sincerely without being overly emotional. This is not a memoir—focus on the research-related support you received, such as your participants, supervisors, etc.

Note that the acknowledgments section is optional.

## Abstract

**What it is:** The abstract provides a concise overview of your entire dissertation. It allows readers to quickly grasp the purpose, importance, methods, key findings, and implications of your study.

**How to develop:** Write it after completing the full dissertation. Include your research question or objectives, methodology, main findings, and conclusions in a single paragraph (usually 150–300 words). Avoid citations or new information not found in the main text.

## Table of Contents

**What it is:** A detailed outline of your dissertation's structure, listing chapters, sections, and their respective page numbers. It guides readers and ensures navigability.

**How to develop:** MS Word can automatically generate the table of contents. Double-check to ensure that the table of contents are updated before final submission.

## List of Figures and Tables

**What it is:** This section lists all visual elements in your dissertation, such as charts, graphs, and tables, along with their titles and page numbers.

**How to develop:** Assign each item a clear and concise caption. Use consistent numbering (e.g., Figure 1.1, Table 2.3) and update the list as changes are made. Include only visuals essential to understanding your data or arguments.

## List of Abbreviations

**What it is:** A compiled list of shortened terms or acronyms used throughout the dissertation, with their full definitions.

**How to develop:** Arrange abbreviations alphabetically. Define each abbreviation clearly on first use within the text, and ensure consistency. This is especially helpful in industry-specific or international dissertations.

## Glossary

**What it is:** A list of technical or specialized terms used in the dissertation, each with a brief definition. It enhances clarity, especially for interdisciplinary work.

**How to develop:** Only include terms that might be unfamiliar to the general academic reader. Keep definitions concise and avoid repeating content from the main chapters. Format it in a reader-friendly table or list.

Note that this item is optional. If you think you have used terms and phrases in your dissertation that readers might not be familiar with, a glossary could help to clarify important phrases and terms with their meanings explained.

# 1. Introduction

**What it is:** The introduction sets the stage for your research by outlining the context, objectives, and relevance of your study. It often concludes with an overview of the dissertation structure.

**How to develop:** A good dissertation introduction section incorporates the following information:

1. It provides background information to give context to your research.
2. It clearly specifies the research problem you wish to address with your research. First, provide the aim and objectives of your research. After that, provide your research questions / hypotheses. It is important to make sure your research's focus and scope are neither too broad nor too narrow.
3. It demonstrates how your research is relevant and how it would contribute to the existing knowledge.
4. It provides an overview of the structure of your dissertation. The last section of an introduction contains an outline of the following chapters. It could start off with something like: "In the following chapter, past literature has been reviewed and critiqued. The proceeding section lays down major research findings..."
5. Theoretical framework – under a separate sub-heading – is also provided within the introductory chapter. The theoretical framework explains how you use the basic, underlying theories to handle the research questions / hypotheses.

All the information presented under this section should be relevant, clear, and engaging. The readers should be able to figure out what, why, when, and how of your study once they have read the introduction.

# 2. Literature Review

**What it is:** A critical evaluation of existing research relevant to your topic. This section clarifies and justifies your research questions or hypotheses. highlights key theories, concepts, and debates that inform your research. The literature review chapter presents previous research performed on the topic and improves your

understanding of the existing literature on your chosen topic. This is usually organised to prepare for and to complement your primary research work completed at a later stage.

**How to develop:** Crafting an effective literature review begins with clarifying your research focus. Before diving into the reading, it's essential to define your research question, objectives, or central themes. This clarity will help you filter the vast amount of literature available and ensure that what you include directly supports your study. Ask yourself: "What do I need to know to frame my research effectively?" By grounding the review in your dissertation's aims, you lay a solid foundation for relevance and cohesion.

Next, conduct a comprehensive search across academic databases such as UWTSD's Library, Google Scholar, Scopus, or other sources. Focus on peer-reviewed journal articles, seminal books, and credible industry reports that speak directly to your topic. Make use of reference management tools like Zotero, Mendeley, or EndNote to organize your sources from the outset—this will save time and reduce errors later during the citation process.

Once you have a collection of sources, the next step is to engage with them critically. Don't just summarize—evaluate. Consider the methodology, validity, context, and conclusions of each study. Take structured notes that go beyond the surface. What theories underpin this study? How does it compare to others in the field? What are its assumptions or weaknesses? Group your notes by themes rather than by individual authors to start shaping a narrative.

As you review the literature, begin to identify key themes, theoretical approaches, and recurring debates. This is where synthesis happens. You might find, for example, that certain leadership theories are frequently used to explain employee motivation in digital work environments, while others are conspicuously absent. Group your insights logically—by theme, chronology, geography, or methodology—and look for patterns, contradictions, and gaps in the research.

When you begin writing, structure the literature review not as a list of articles but as a coherent, flowing argument. Avoid the temptation to write "one paragraph per author." Instead, present grouped insights under thematic headings and weave in critical commentary. Use connecting phrases like "X builds on the work of Y," or "While A argues..., B takes a different view..." to illustrate how ideas develop across the field. The headings should be reflective of the research questions or hypotheses.

The heart of a strong literature review is synthesis—not just showing what has been said, but making sense of it in light of your own research. Highlight trends and tensions, and clearly explain how existing research shapes your thinking. This leads naturally into identifying the gap your study addresses. For example, you might point out that while digital transformation has been widely studied in multinational firms, little is known about its impact on local SMEs in emerging markets. At the end of the synthesis, a good understanding of the topic should have been provided, and the literature gaps should have been identified.

The **theoretical framework** is a critical component of the literature review chapter. It explains how you plan to explore the phenomenon and find the answers to the research questions / hypotheses. It defines the key concepts, models, and theories that underpin your research. This section provides the academic lens through which you will interpret your findings and analyse your research problem. It helps position your study within existing knowledge and demonstrates how your work builds on or challenges established theory. In essence, the theoretical framework shows how the various dimensions and variables are connected and how they together help answering the research questions / hypotheses.

Depending on the nature of your research, the theoretical framework is replaced by a conceptual framework, a thematic synthesis, an empirical review, or a contextual review instead.

After that, an educated estimation of the answers should be provided. The educated estimation is the expectation of the answer – what do you expect to find out when you apply the theoretical framework, collect the data, and analyse the data?

Finally, revise the review carefully. Make sure that the key concepts have been clarified, the research questions or hypotheses have been justified, the underlying reasons of the phenomenon have been discussed, key frameworks have been introduced to explain said reasons, the gaps have been identified, a theoretical framework or conceptional framework is provided to guide the research, and the expectations have been set.

Throughout the review, maintain an analytical and authoritative tone. Your voice should guide the reader, not get buried under blocks of citation. Avoid quoting excessively and focus instead on comparing, contrasting, and contextualizing. The goal is to demonstrate that you understand the field well enough to contribute something meaningful to it.

### **3. Research Methodology**

**What is it:** The methodology chapter is the engine room of your dissertation—it explains *how* you conducted your research and *why* you chose those specific methods. It outlines the philosophical stance, research design, data collection techniques, sampling strategy, and analysis procedures. This chapter is crucial because it demonstrates the academic rigour of your study and ensures that your findings are credible, replicable, and aligned with your research objectives. It also allows readers to assess the validity and reliability of your approach, and it provides transparency about any limitations or ethical considerations.

**How to develop:** To develop a strong methodology chapter, begin by clearly restating your research aims and questions. This provides the reader with a direct reminder of your study's objectives and ensures that all subsequent methodological decisions are anchored to these goals. A strong link between aims and methods enhances the coherence and validity of your approach.

Next, define your research philosophy by explaining your epistemological stance—whether it aligns with positivism, which assumes an objective reality and is typically associated with quantitative methods, or interpretivism, which focuses on subjective meaning and is commonly linked to qualitative approaches. Justify why the chosen

philosophy is appropriate for your research context and how it influences your understanding of knowledge generation.

Following that, clarify your research approach. Determine whether your study adopts a deductive approach, which tests existing theory, or an inductive approach, which aims to build theory based on observed patterns. This decision has significant implications for your design choices, particularly around how data is collected and analysed. Be sure to provide a rationale for your choice, grounded in your research problem.

You should then select a suitable research strategy—such as a case study, survey, ethnography, or action research—and explain how this overarching design will enable you to answer your research questions. Again, justify your selection, especially in terms of its relevance to your research aims and practical feasibility.

After establishing your strategic framework, identify the specific data you intend to collect. This might include numerical figures such as sales volume, profit margin, or incident counts, as well as behavioural or perceptual data such as employee attitudes, decision-making criteria, or time spent on processes. Clearly articulate how this data links to your research questions or hypotheses, ensuring the reader understands its relevance and analytical value.

Once the data types are identified, explain your data collection methods. Specify whether you employed tools such as surveys, interviews, focus groups, or document analysis. Describe the instruments used (e.g., questionnaires or interview guides), and justify why these were chosen in the context of your methodological stance and research objectives. Describe clearly the process of data collection used in your research: what did you do, when did you do, where did you do, how did you do to collect the data. This description should help the reader understand how you collected data.

Describe your sampling technique in detail, including how participants were selected (e.g., purposive, random, or snowball sampling) and why this sampling method was appropriate for your study. Provide the sample size and any inclusion or exclusion criteria to clarify the scope of your participant pool.

Your next focus should be on the data analysis process. Outline the analytical techniques employed—for instance, thematic analysis for qualitative data or regression analysis for quantitative data. If you used software such as NVivo, SPSS, or Excel, mention this and provide a brief justification for its use, particularly in terms of improving rigour and consistency.

Ethical considerations are also essential to any robust methodology. Explain how you obtained informed consent, ensured participant confidentiality, and managed any sensitive data. Mention whether formal ethical approval was secured from a relevant institutional body.

Finally, be transparent about your study's limitations. Discuss any methodological constraints, such as a small sample size, potential biases, or issues with data accessibility. Reflect on how you sought to mitigate these limitations to uphold the integrity of your research.

## 4. Data Analysis

**What it is:** The data analysis chapter is where you transform raw data into meaningful insights. It's the bridge between your methodology and your discussion, showing how your research questions / hypotheses are addressed through systematic examination of the data. This chapter presents your findings clearly and objectively—whether through statistical outputs, thematic patterns, or both—depending on whether your study is quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods. It's not about interpretation (that comes in the discussion), but about *what the data says*.

For example, if you conducted interviews, this chapter might present recurring themes with supporting quotes. If you ran a survey, it might include descriptive statistics, correlations, or regression outputs. The goal is to present the evidence in a structured, transparent, and replicable way.

**How to develop:** To begin the data analysis chapter, it's important to reintroduce the research questions or objectives. This step frames the purpose of the analysis and reminds readers what the data is intended to address. It provides a clear foundation for interpreting subsequent results and reinforces the connection between your analysis and your overarching research aims.

Next, describe the dataset you have collected and will be analysing. This includes the size of the dataset and its key characteristics, such as the number of survey respondents, interview participants, or documents reviewed. If relevant, provide demographic information like participants' age, job roles, industries, or other contextual variables that help define your sample and support the credibility and applicability of your findings.

Following this, outline the analytical approach you adopted. In quantitative studies, describe the statistical tests used—such as t-tests, ANOVA, or regression analysis—and explain why they were appropriate for your data and research questions. In qualitative studies, describe your coding process, thematic or content analysis methods, and justify your approach in relation to the research design. Be sure to mention any analytical software employed (e.g., SPSS, R, NVivo, or Excel), as this helps demonstrate methodological rigour and transparency.

Then, present the findings in a clear and structured manner. For quantitative data, use tables, charts, and figures to report descriptive statistics (such as means and standard deviations) and inferential statistics (such as p-values and confidence intervals). Indicate the results of hypothesis tests where applicable. For qualitative data, present themes supported by direct quotes from participants, and organise the presentation around key themes or research questions.

After presenting your results, highlight key patterns that emerge from the data. Draw the reader's attention to significant trends, correlations, relationships, or unexpected findings. At this point, it is essential to link your findings directly to each research question or hypothesis—stating, where appropriate, whether hypotheses are accepted or rejected. However, avoid offering interpretations or explanations here; your focus should be solely on what the data shows, as detailed interpretation belongs in the discussion chapter.

To ensure clarity and transparency, all tables and figures should be clearly labelled and referenced within the text. Use consistent terminology, formatting, and data presentation throughout. If your analysis involves large datasets, coding frameworks, or statistical outputs, consider including them in an appendix to keep the main body of your chapter focused and reader-friendly.

Finally, acknowledge any limitations encountered during the analysis. These might include missing data, outliers, subjective coding challenges, or technical constraints. Recognising these issues sets the stage for a more reflective and nuanced discussion in the following chapter and enhances the integrity of your research reporting.

## **5. Discussion**

**What it is:** The discussion chapter is where you interpret your findings, explain their significance, and connect them back to your research questions, literature, and theoretical framework. Unlike the data analysis chapter, which presents results objectively, the discussion chapter is analytical and reflective. It's your opportunity to demonstrate critical thinking, academic maturity, and the ability to situate your work within the broader scholarly and practical context.

In essence, this chapter answers the question: "So what?" What do your findings mean? Why do they matter? How do they contribute to knowledge or practice?

**How to develop:** To begin the discussion chapter, it is important to restate the research problem, aims, and questions. Reminding the reader of these core elements helps frame the ensuing discussion and ensures clarity of purpose. By revisiting these points at the outset, you position your findings in direct relation to the study's objectives, which strengthens the coherence and relevance of your argument.

Following this reorientation, summarise the key findings presented in the data analysis chapter. Rather than repeating all the results in detail, provide a concise

overview that highlights the most significant patterns, trends, or anomalies. Focus especially on findings that directly address the research questions, while acknowledging any unexpected outcomes that may warrant further reflection.

The central part of the discussion involves interpreting these findings in depth. Begin by explicitly stating how each research question or hypothesis has been answered based on the evidence. Then, delve into the reasoning behind these answers: explain why the data has led to these conclusions, and evaluate whether the results support or contradict existing theories or findings discussed in the literature review. Were there any limitations in your research that may have contributed to the current findings? Highlight areas of alignment and divergence, offering insight into how your research expands, challenges, or reinforces existing knowledge. If the study has produced any surprising results, propose plausible explanations and consider contextual factors that may have influenced them.

Finally, address the literature gap identified earlier in your dissertation. Reflect on whether your research has successfully filled this gap and explain how your findings contribute to bridging that theoretical or empirical shortfall. This demonstrates the originality and significance of your work within the broader academic field.

## **6. Conclusion**

**What it is:** The conclusion chapter is the final major section of your dissertation. It draws together the entire research journey—summarising your key findings, answering your research questions, and reflecting on the significance of your work. Unlike the discussion chapter, which interprets findings in depth, the conclusion takes a broader, high-level view, offering closure and highlighting your study's contributions, limitations, and future directions.

Think of it as your final word: it tells the reader what you discovered, why it matters, and what should happen next.

**How to develop:** To begin the conclusion chapter, it is important to revisit the research aim and questions by restating the overall purpose of the study. This helps to re-anchor the reader in the core focus of the research and prepares them for the final reflections. Following this, provide a concise summary of the key findings, drawing only on the most essential outcomes as identified in the data analysis. These findings should be explicitly linked back to the research questions, showing what the data reveals in direct response to those initial enquiries.

You should then clearly address how each research question or hypothesis has been answered, providing a straightforward response based on your evidence. At this point, it is also vital to reaffirm whether and how the study has addressed the literature gap highlighted earlier in your work, thus demonstrating the original contribution of your research.

From there, highlight the value of your study by discussing its contributions to both theory and practice. Explain whether the findings confirm, extend, or challenge existing theories, and then move on to outline what practical insights or recommendations can be drawn for professionals such as managers, policymakers, or other stakeholders. This dual contribution underlines the relevance and significance of your dissertation.

Be sure to acknowledge the limitations of your study, whether they relate to sample size, scope, methodology, or access to data. Doing so demonstrates academic transparency and provides context for interpreting your findings. These limitations naturally lead into your recommendations—both practical suggestions for implementation and directions for future research that can build upon the foundation you've laid.

Finally, bring your dissertation to a close with a strong, reflective statement that underscores the overall significance of your work. This final comment should provide a sense of closure while also inviting continued thought or investigation, leaving the reader with a clear impression of your study's value and contribution.

## 7. Reference list

**What it is:** a list of the sources that were used to develop the work.

**How to develop:** All academic sources that you collected information from should be cited in-text and also presented in a reference list, so the readers can easily locate the source of information when needed.

In UWTSD, the Harvard referencing on Cite Them Right is the recommended style of referencing.

## 8. Appendices

**What it is:** list(s) of additional materials which are not central to the work, but could be helpful to the reader.

**How to develop:** Each chapter of the dissertation should have relevant information. Any information that is not directly relevant to your research topic but your readers might be interested in (interview transcripts etc.) should be moved under the Appendices section.

Things like questionnaires, survey items or readings that were used in the study's experiment are mostly included under appendices.