



Handbook for
Religious Studies Dissertation HPRS6012 and
Theology Dissertation HPRS6036

2018-2019



Please note: There may need to be changes made to the
content of this handbook.
You will be informed of any changes and an updated
version will be available on Moodle.

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Introduction

In level 6, as part of the assessment for your degree, you are required to write a dissertation. This is an extended piece of work on a topic of your choice (subject to agreement with the Programme Director)

Working on the Dissertation will enable you to pursue your own academic interests and also to develop and demonstrate your own research skills. The emphasis is firmly placed on developing your skills to work independently, though you will be assisted by a member of staff who will act as your supervisor. It is also a time to draw on the knowledge and skills you have acquired over the course of 3 years of study.

Dissertations can display your talents at their best, but they can also exaggerate your shortcomings. It is possible for you to devote too much time to this work, with the result that other vital aspects of your studies are neglected. Alternatively, you can also neglect the work or misjudge your time management. **Leaving the work on the Dissertation to the last minute could be very damaging.** This handbook is designed to help you to do your best in the Dissertation.



Please be aware:

The Dissertation counts for a significant proportion of the 120 credits you will need to pass level 6 and qualify for your degree. It therefore constitutes a substantial part of your degree programme. As the dissertation is worth 40 credits, it is not possible to reach the number of credits required to qualify for an Honours degree if the dissertation is failed. Information about how credit is awarded to level 6 students can be found in chapter 6 of the *Academic Quality Handbook*, 'Taught Award Regulations'.

Module Descriptor

MODULE CODE: HPRS6012 + HPRS6036
TITLE: Religious Studies Dissertation and Theology Dissertation
DATED: 24/04/2018
LEVEL: 6
CREDITS: 40
JACS CODE: V620

AIM(S)

1. To enable students to identify an appropriate research question and to produce a piece of independent scholarly research.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon the successful completion of this module, the student should be able to:

1. identify a suitable area and question for in-depth and critical research;
2. develop appropriate methodological and theoretical approaches to answer this research question;
3. construct and manage a body of research drawn from a range of source material;
4. situate their work within the wider scholarly literature of their chosen discipline;
5. present the research in the appropriate way.

INDICATIVE CONTENT

1. A topic will be identified by the student, with guidance from a member of the academic staff. A structured proposal will be produced and the student will be allocated a supervisor.
2. The students will receive guidance from their individual supervisors and general guidance from the module co-ordinator, alongside working independently on their research.
3. Students are required to give an oral presentation as part of the process of writing their dissertation.

LEARNING AND TEACHING STRATEGY

The study time for the module is divided as follows:

Activity type	Hours	Percentage
Scheduled learning	20	5%
Independent learning	380	95%
Placement learning		
TOTAL	400	100%

ASSESSMENT

Assessment Component 1

☐ Written exam ☐ Coursework ☐ Practical

Mode of assessment	Volume	Weighting
Proposal	1,000 words	5%

Assessment Component 2

Written exam Coursework Practical

Mode of assessment	Volume	Weighting
Oral presentation	10 minutes	5%

Assessment Component 3

Written exam Coursework Practical

Mode of assessment	Volume	Weighting
Dissertation	10,000 words	90%

Assessment Summary

Activity type	Percentage
Written exam	
Coursework	95%
Practical	5%
TOTAL	100%

READING LIST

Module Code	HPRS6012	
Module Title:	Religious Studies Dissertation	
Classification	Reading List entry	Electronic*
Essential	Greetham, Bryan, <i>How to Write Your Undergraduate Dissertation</i> , (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).	?
Further	Cottrell, Stella, <i>The Study Skills Handbook</i> , (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).	?
Further	Cottrell, Stella, <i>Dissertations and Project Reports: A Step by Step Guide</i> , (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014).	?
Further	Peck, John and Martin Coyle <i>The Student's Guide to Writing: Spelling, punctuation and grammar</i> (3rd edn) (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013).	?





Step-by-step Guide



Choosing a topic

The first thing you have to do is to find a subject or topic for your Dissertation. We do not assign you a topic. So, how do you go about choosing the subject? Here are a few suggestions:

- This is your opportunity to work on topic that interests you. Pick a subject that will engage your attention and enthusiasm. You are going to spend a lot of time working on it.
- Be practical. You cannot write such a great deal in 10,000 words, even if at this stage it seems like a daunting task. By all means start with a broad field but realise that in your preliminary reading you will have to focus on a narrower subject.
- Be guided by the availability of material, access, and language. Get a sense of the important primary and secondary literature in the field, and check to see how much is readily available for your use.
- Have you got access to the materials you will need over the summer?
- Be realistic in what you can achieve. There is nothing wrong with being ambitious, but temper this with realism. The Dissertation is only one element in your level 6 work: it must not take over.

You can approach a member of the lecturing staff for an initial, informal discussion about a possible subject and for some advice about how to put together your proposal.

Note: approaching a member of staff and receiving advice from them does not guarantee that member of staff will be your supervisor.

Setting out your proposal

Your initial proposal should be 300-500 words in length (not counting the bibliography), submitted through Moodle and presented on the Undergraduate Dissertation Proposal Form (available on Moodle). The proposal should include:

- **Title:** Avoid titles which are too lengthy or unfocussed. A general topic will be much less helpful to you than one which is specific.
- **Aim:** What do you want to achieve in your Dissertation? In other words, what are you trying to say in this piece of work? What will you describe, analyse and evaluate? What kind of argument will you make?
- **Methodology:** What will your research method/methods be? If you intend to rely not just on text-based research but also on methods like interviews, surveys and participant observation, you need to describe these plans in some detail. Please make sure to use these methods only if they will truly make a significant contribution to your research. These methods are time-consuming,

and require ethical clearance. If there are ethical issues with your work, an Application for Ethical Approval must be submitted on E3 FORM that is available on Moodle.

- **Provisional chapter headings:** This will show how you intend breaking down your title into smaller units and it will show how you intend to deal with the issues you will discuss in your Dissertation. This section will enable your supervisor to assess how well you have worked out a structure for your proposed research. Each chapter heading should be followed by a sentence or two indicating the content to be covered.
- **Bibliography:** It is not envisaged that your bibliography will be exhaustive at this stage. It is only to be expected that some items you list here might prove to be irrelevant, and that others not listed here might eventually prove to be extremely useful. At this early stage, the bibliography will show your supervisor how well you have thought through your research plan, the extent of available material, and the breadth of your survey (of books, journal articles, web-based resources etc.). Proposals should have at least 20 items in the bibliography.

NB Make sure that your bibliography conforms to the required style.

Once your proposal has been submitted, you will be allocated a supervisor.

Ethics

If you are planning to gather primary data as a part of your research you will need to apply for Ethical Approval. For undergraduate students this application is made (at least initially) to the Faculty. You must not start on any field-research until you have formally obtained ethics approval.

A link to the relevant application form - is available on Moodle.



Supervision

In addition to the meetings with your supervisor outlined below, students are required to meet, as a group, with the co-ordinator of the Dissertation module, usually every two weeks and these sessions will be included on the timetable produced by the Faculty. Their purpose will be to discuss general issues relating to the Dissertation.



First meeting with your supervisor

After submitting your proposal and being allocated a supervisor, you must email your supervisor to arrange a meeting. This meeting should take place **before the summer break** at an agreed time. It is important that you work on your Dissertation over the summer break as a first draft is to be submitted during semester 1 of the new academic year. Also, there will be other module assessment deadlines during the new academic year so getting as much of your Dissertation written over the summer will mean there will be less to worry about during the year. Meeting your supervisor before the summer break will ensure that you have the best possible start to your research. You will also determine at this meeting if it is necessary for you to make an application for ethics approval.

Second meeting with your supervisor

You must email your supervisor at the start of the new academic year and arrange to meet within the first 2 weeks. It is important that you prepare thoroughly for this meeting and bring to it any questions that you have regarding your work and its completion, particularly the new version of the proposal that will be assessed..

First written Submission (to be assessed)

The first written submission (via Moodle), is the final version of your proposal and is to be submitted on **Friday 12 October 2018**.

Second Written Submission (Draft Chapter)

On Friday 16 November you should submit a draft piece of work. This could take the form of a draft introduction and/or first chapter and should be at least **2,500 words** long.



Third meeting with your supervisor

You must then arrange a **third meeting** with your supervisor before the Christmas break when you will receive feedback and discuss your ideas for the rest of your Dissertation.

NB This is the only time that your supervisor will be able to read and comment on a draft of your work. During subsequent meetings, you can only discuss your work; supervisors will not be able to read any further drafts.

Subsequent meetings with your supervisor

We recommend that you meet again with your supervisor late January/early February to discuss your progress and the oral presentation that will take place in March.

The Presentation

The **presentations** for the Dissertation will take place during the week commencing **11 March 2019**. Please ensure that you are available during that week. The exact date will be confirmed early in March.

Responsibilities

Responsibilities of the student

The Dissertation module is intended to:

- Help you to develop the skills associated with independent learning
- Help you to be able to produce competently and on schedule a sustained argument and an attractively produced piece of work

Consequently it is your responsibility to:

- Come up with a coherent and deliverable subject for study
- Make sure you are satisfied that sufficient resources exist for you to complete the project
- Manage your time to ensure that you can complete your research and writing within the set deadlines. **START EARLY!**
- Familiarise yourself with the contents of this handbook
- Take care with grammar, punctuation, writing style, etc.
- Proof-read your work
- Keep to the word limit

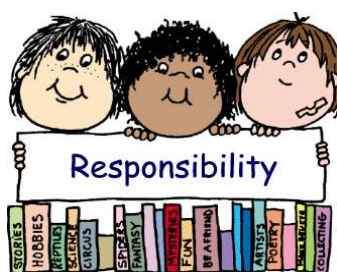
Responsibilities of the supervisor

The supervisor's role is to advise you on how successfully to complete your work. This relates primarily to the feasibility of your proposal, your approach to the subject and your intended argument.

Supervisors will not:

- Find a subject for you
- Write any section of the Dissertation for you
- Read any more material than that specified above
- Proof-read and correct the final draft

Supervisors will see you formally on four occasions, as outlined in this Handbook. There can also be a fifth formal meeting at a time felt to be appropriate. These will be one-to-one meetings at a mutually agreed time and place.



The Process of Research and Writing Up

Your supervisor is there to guide you through your research and to make sure that you understand what is required of you. However, this is an independent piece of research and you must take responsibility for planning your work and keeping to schedule.

Here are some hints:

- Try to be organised and methodical right from the start. As you read you should make careful notes and note the bibliographical details of your sources.
 - Do not be afraid to start writing. You do not need to wait until all your research is complete before you put pen to paper (or finger to keyboard). You do not need to keep everything you write in the final dissertation/project.
 - **We cannot emphasise enough the importance of getting on with your research over the summer vacation.** This is the only relatively undisturbed time you will get in which to cover major ground. Once you come back to University, you will inevitably have a range of other deadlines and commitments to meet. As far as possible, set aside regular hours to work on your dissertation, both over the summer, and, just as crucially, during term time. The weeks have a habit of disappearing quickly.
 - Make a timetable for yourself, working backwards from the submission date. Ask yourself: at what date has the dissertation to be submitted? How much time do I need to allow for binding? How much time do I need to allow for proof-reading the text? When does the typing need to be completed? Careful planning eliminates panic.
- 
- Keep the word limit in mind
 - Keep copies of your work
 - Avoid plagiarism and all other forms of unfair practice! Make sure that you reference correctly and that you present direct quotations correctly.

Marking



The assessed proposals will be marked by the supervisor and moderated by another member of staff.

The presentations will be viewed by two internal markers, not necessarily including the supervisor.

The dissertation will be double-marked internally and a mark agreed. The work will then be moderated by an External Examiner (ie external to UWTSD).

The Faculty's Generic Assessment Criteria is available on Moodle.

Giving the Presentation

Presentations will take place during the week commencing **11 March 2019**; the exact date and time will be confirmed early in March. A PowerPoint (or equivalent) presentation should accompany this task. The presentation for the Dissertation is 10 minutes with 5-10 minutes for questions and discussion

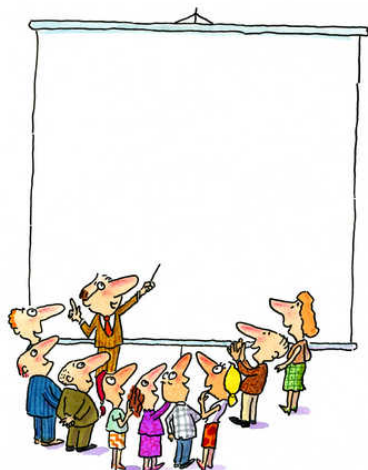
Aim

The Presentation is to be a summary of your dissertation and should include information on how you have gathered material for it and how you set about writing it.

General information

Presentations will be given by students individually, but some students of your year group will be present. Two members of TRS staff will also be present in order to assess the presentations.

The presentation is designed to help you to develop your skills in presenting and communicating information. You will therefore be assessed on those skills as well as the subject-specific information you will be conveying.



On the Day

Work should be brought to the presentation on a memory stick as well as hard copy and you will need to give the hard copy of the slides to the examiners. **YOU WILL ALSO NEED TO SUBMIT YOUR POWERPOINT SLIDES TO MOODLE.**

Assessment

The markers will be following the Faculty's Marking Criteria (available on Moodle). The following are the kinds of things the markers will be looking for:

- ◆ Timing and Pace
- ◆ Clarity and coherency
- ◆ Engagement with audience (e.g. audible; appropriate body language: eye contact)
- ◆ Knowledge and understanding of key issues
- ◆ Extent of research
- ◆ Development of argument (e.g. intro; main body; conclusion; avoidance of repetition; logical flow of argument/slides)
- ◆ Choice of key issues and relevance
- ◆ Design and clarity of slides (words on page, use of images, layout, grammar, punctuation, etc.)

The Final Submission



You must submit your Dissertation or on or by

FRIDAY 10 MAY 2019

- Before you submit your Dissertation, read through it one last time. Pay close attention to style and make sure that you are expressing yourself clearly. You might find it helpful to read what you have written out loud.
- **Make sure that you do not exceed the word limit.** The word limit does **not** include footnotes when all they contain are references. However, if additional material is placed in footnotes, that will count in the word count. The word count also excludes abstract, front cover and bibliography. The work may contain a limited number of selected images/graphs/diagrams/tables. You can include a glossary - this too is not included in the word count.
- You can include appendices, but these should be kept to a minimum and included only with the agreement of your supervisor. They will not count towards the word limit, but they will also not count towards the overall assessment of your work and should only be used to contain material absolutely necessary to verify the claims made in the dissertation/project.
- Use a spell-check and proof-read your work before submitting it.
- **Two bound hard copies** of the Dissertation and an electronic copy (via Moodle) must be submitted on or before the submission deadline. It is possible for dissertations to be bound on campus but you need to check the availability of this service. You will be informed nearer the time where and at what time the hard copies are to be submitted.

Format and structure

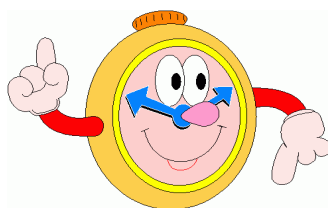
You should format and structure your work as follows:

- The work should be printed on standard A4 paper. One and a half line spacing should be used throughout. The point size should be no smaller than 12. The

pages should be numbered sequentially. **The margins on the left need to allow for binding.**

- **The front cover** page should display:
 - (a) Exact title of Dissertation
 - (b) Your name
 - (c) Title of degree scheme being followed
 - (d) Module name, code and number of credits
 - (e) The following declaration:
'I certify that this dissertation is my own work, and that any use of other people's work is fully acknowledged in the references'.
You must sign this declaration.
 - (f) The word count
- **The second page** should contain an abstract of no more than 300 words. The abstract is a brief synopsis of your work and does not contribute to the word count.
- **The third page** should contain a list of contents and any tables or figures.
- You can include:
 - A list of abbreviations (if needed)
 - Acknowledgements
- This will be followed by the main text of the Dissertation.
- Lastly will be the **Bibliography**.
- The Dissertation should include a completed Dissertation **marksheet** (available on Moodle). This should not be bound with the work but should be placed loose inside the front cover.
- Examples of a coverpage and contents pages are in the appendix at the end of this Handbook. A further example of a contents page is the one in this Handbook!

Timetable

8 May 2018	Submit Proposal
w/c 21 May 2018	By this time you will have been allocated a supervisor. You should arrange the first formal meeting with your supervisor for feedback and planning.
Summer vacation	Research your topic for your Dissertation according to the plan agreed between you and your supervisor.
First 2 weeks of The new academic year	Arrange and have second formal meeting with supervisor to discuss progress of research.
	
Friday 12 October 2018	Submit final proposal for assessment to Moodle
Friday 16 November 2018	Submit draft piece of work
Before the Christmas break	Arrange and have third formal meeting with supervisor to receive feedback on your work and to discuss the next stage of research.
Late January/ early February 2019	Arrange and have fourth formal meeting with supervisor
Week beginning 11 March 2019	Presentations will take place this week.
Friday 10 May 2019	Submission date for the Dissertation (remember to allow time for binding!)



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

Title of Dissertation/Project

Student name

Degree Programme
Module name/code

I certify that this dissertation/project is my own work, and that any use of other people's work is fully acknowledged in the references.

Student signature

Word Count:

Appendix 2: Examples of a contents page

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