

Dear Student,

Congratulations on your academic success so far. You have now completed Part 1 of the MA course which would merit the award of a Postgraduate Diploma in Bilingualism and Multilingualism. However, embarking on the completion of a dissertation in Part 2 of the programme will lead to the full award of the Masters qualification.

Part 2 is a 60-credit module and involves undertaking a small-scale research project which will result in the preparation of a report of approximately 15,000 words.

Having studied module ECDA7003: Research Methodology, you will already be familiar with the essential requirements of conducting a research project and of the need to follow certain procedures, including giving due consideration to a choice of methodologies which are 'fit-for-purpose' as well as to any ethical issues.

The area of the research to be undertaken will be entirely your choice with the proviso, of course, that it is directly related to a particular aspect of the academic discipline of bilingualism and multilingualism, a field of study with which you are already very familiar.

Studying previous modules will, inevitably, have made you aware that this is a very wide and varied field. In the process of studying Part 1 of the MA programme you will also have become increasingly aware that, despite allocating specific aspects of the field to individual modules, such aspects are largely intertwined and are often impossible to be treated independently. The effect of a range of political ideologies on respective models adopted for so-called 'bilingual' teaching, and the consequential difficulty of applying evidence related to the cognitive effects of bilingual proficiency to current pedagogical practice was one example of how modules in Part 1 could not always be disentangled and treated discretely if one were to adopt a more *holistic* view of a particular area of study. Students will also have become aware of other possible connections which could be made across the modules previously studied, as well as with areas of the discipline which they may not have studied *specifically*, such as between societal bilingualism and language planning for example.

Studying the modules in Part 1 will, possibly, have already provided you with some idea of what you would like to investigate further for the purposes of fulfilling the requirements of your final dissertation in Part 2. Having decided on an area of study, albeit with a more general and less specific perspective, the references and bibliography

associated with various modules might also be a beneficial source of knowledge in order to make a more focused and final decision.

Such sources will also enable you to make a more informed decision about the *potential* of the intended area of study and to what extent it could be 'fruitful' in generating data for example.

Whereas having a passion for a particular area of study or a specific topic can inevitably be advantageous in providing the necessary motivation in maintaining commitment in order to fulfill the task of presenting a completed dissertation, your choice will also need to give due consideration to *practical* aspects of conducting research and to what extent it is logistically possible to complete your research within a limited time-scale. Your attention will have already been drawn to this aspect in the process of studying module ECDA7003: Research Methodology, and will also have been highlighted in publications which were adopted for that module, namely:

Bell, J. & Waters S. *Doing Your Research Project: A Guide for First-time Researchers*. London: McGraw Hill Education, 2018 (7th Edition).

Dawson, C. *Introduction to Research Methods. (A Practical Guide for Anyone Undertaking a Research Project)*. Begbroke: How to Books, 2019 (5th edition).

Such practical aspects will involve a very wide range of issues to which you will need to give very detailed consideration *in advance*. Generally speaking, thinking about issues such as the following will raise an awareness of some potential problems:

Will my research involve travelling; how will I get there; will such travelling be unnecessarily time-consuming and expensive?

To what extent will I be heavily dependent on the contribution and co-operation of *others*, and will they be in a position to offer such support considering their professional commitments and availability for example?

Will my research be affected by extraneous circumstances beyond my control if conducted at certain times of the year; for example, will it be interrupted by school holidays?

In what way will *the practical demands my choice of methodology* also limit my ability to complete the research considering some of the issues mentioned previously? For example, interviewing involves others who can be professionally heavily committed and who are not always available throughout the year.

In case you have not yet decided on a research topic, your tutor, of course, will provide you with excellent guidance based on certain criteria such as your personal interest, the availability of resources, and practical aspects which can generate sufficient valid a reliable data.

Your tutor will also provide you with guidance *throughout* your research. The nature of the task involved in completing this final dissertation is such that maintaining contact with your tutor is essential in order to avoid any unnecessary mishaps and making incorrect decisions which might hinder further progress.

Having decided finally on the focus of your research, you will be required to submit a Research Proposal. This might be possible before your initial meeting with your supervisor if you are quite sure that all issues have already been thought through and that there are no insurmountable impediments. However, the approval of your supervisor will be required before you can proceed to the next stage which will be to submit an Ethics Approval Form to the Ethics Committee of the Institute of Education and Humanities (PG2-Application for Ethical Approval). Adherence to widely acknowledged standards of professional practice is an essential tenet of conducting research. This can easily be achieved by following the UWTSD Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice as well as those of other professional organisations, such as the British Educational Research Association (BERA) for example. **It is emphasized that no research can be undertaken before approval is given by the Ethics Committee** which usually meets on a monthly basis. Submissions which are not approved on the first occasion can, therefore, be resubmitted the following month.

Details relating to your dissertation can be found in the Module Handbook and in the University Regulations - Postgraduate Taught Student Guide, available from: <http://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/academic-office/university-regulations-student-guide/>

The Handbook relates to different MA programmes which are listed at the beginning and generically provides *common guidance* on aspects of preparing and submitting a dissertation as well as details of the criteria by which your dissertation will be assessed, thus making it *specifically* and directly relevant to your programme of study. However, whereas the Handbook provides sound information on a wide range of aspects and guides students through various stages of the dissertation process, you are strongly recommended to consult your tutor should

you, for some reason, be unable to adhere to any of the guidelines provided or need further clarification on any issues.

There will be an opportunity, however, to discuss such matters as they arise during regular meetings with your tutors which will also be formally recorded on a Postgraduate Taught Dissertation Supervision Record (see Appendix 2 of the Handbook).

As well as the broad guidance provided above (which is elaborated upon in much greater detail in the Dissertation Handbook), electronic copies of documents needed to meet various administrative requirements are also provided.

I wish you every success as you proceed through the final stage of the MA Bilingualism and Multilingualism programme, and trust that you will find Part 2 as rewarding as Part 1.

Dr Hywel Glyn Lewis