

**BSc (Hons) Architecture,
Built and Natural
Environment**

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A Guide to the Preparation of a Dissertation



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BSc within Built portfolio and BSc

Environment, Sustainability &

Climate Change

This is the most important message we can give you as you commence this piece of work...



1. INTRODUCTION

These guidelines are designed to assist you in the process of completing a successful dissertation. They should be used in collaboration with your Research Methods module and an allocated supervisor for the dissertation. In addition, dissertation / research method textbooks and previous dissertations should also be consulted.

PLEASE NOTE: these notes are written with the most common timeframe in mind, whereby students start their dissertation in the first term of their third year, however, some students have different course progression timeframes, and may begin their dissertation in the 2nd semester of their final year and complete in the 3rd semester. Please check all of your deadlines and timeframes with your tutor, supervisor, and / or Programme Manager to ensure you complete on time without issue.

2. WHAT IS A DISSERTATION?

A final year dissertation differs from normal assessed coursework in terms of the way the subject of the dissertation is defined, the size or duration of the exercise, and the fact that it must be presented in a prescribed form. In terms of methods of investigation, analysis, synthesis, discussion of conclusions and referencing of source material, a dissertation should exhibit characteristics which are also evident in much written work produced for assessment on an honours degree course.

In more simple terms it is about setting an overall aim and specific hypotheses or objectives that can be achievable.

The key to a good dissertation is hopefully included in these pages but the best dissertations focus on relatively narrow issues (*say more about less*), state a clear purpose and explain how the purpose will be achieved, and use relevant primary, secondary and tertiary data in the process in a sensible way. The way to make the exercise less of a burden is to focus on where you have an interest and where you suspect data is available or can be obtained and then to divide the process you have planned into small workable sections which you can complete and then come back to as you formulate the dissertation.

3. WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE DISSERTATION?

There are two fundamental purposes:

- To provide an opportunity to study in depth a topic of your own choice relating to the degree programme;
- To provide an opportunity for students to experience the challenges and rewards of sustained independent study.

The Dissertation is intended as an opportunity for you to demonstrate and have assessed your ability to:

- Select a researchable topic for independent study.
- Justify the relevance of your topic.
- Extend and deepen your personal understanding of the chosen areas.
- Sustain independent study.
- Anticipate and solve problems in pursuit of that study.
- Identify the key issues in that study.

4. WORD LENGTH

The Dissertation must be written up as a 10,000-word study. A 10% above or below tolerance is permitted without penalty. The limitation on the number of words excludes appendices and reference / bibliography lists, any tables or figures. There must be only restricted direct quotation from other sources within this total length; quotes are only to be used to add value to your work. The dissertation must be the student's own work.

5. COMMENCING A DISSERTATION

During the second term of the second year, you will be asked to select a subject which will form the basis of your final year dissertation. The subject may be selected by yourself and approved after consultation with a lecturer who is appointed to supervise your dissertation. This should be submitted to the dissertation coordinator BEFORE the Easter break.

Once selected, the broad subject area should only be amended after detailed discussions with your dissertation supervisor. Normally such amendments will involve a narrowing down of the broad subject area to indicate a specific aspect of the subject on which your investigation will focus.

You should carry out a preliminary literature search, have had sufficient contact with your supervisor to establish the focus of your investigation and be able to complete and submit a synopsis of your dissertation by June of year 2 (preferably) but no later than week 2 of your final year. It is expected that you undertake reading and/or data collection for your dissertation during the summer period before your return to year 3.

With the change to the new university common module at L6, the about process may change slightly; however it is still anticipated that discussions will begin before you all leave for summer of your second year to allow you all the maximum time to develop this piece of work.

6. PROCEDURE LEADING UP TO THE DISSERTATION

You must select a topic and submit the title and a synopsis of the proposed dissertation to the dissertation coordinator by the end of the fifth term, usually the last week of term before the Easter vacation in Year 2 on the full-time programme. Those following the part-time mode should seek advice from their Programme Director.

6.1 Topic, Title and Synopsis

The subject of the dissertation should be in the broad area of built / natural environments. Normally, you will be responsible for choosing a suitable topic. However, there may be occasions where assistance / advice of member/s of the programme team may be sought. Once the topic has been agreed a supervisor will be allocated to assist you to develop your dissertation. It is recommended that you prepare a proposal containing the following:

- A draft title.
- A statement of aims and objectives.
- A synopsis of the content (200-500 words).
- An indication of the methodology to be adopted, for example, case study, visits, questionnaires, interviews, etc.

6.2 Approval of Topic and Allocation of Supervisor

Your topic submission will need to be formally approved by the dissertation coordinator, possibly following consultation and adjustment, and a supervisor allocated.

Approval of the topic, aims, objectives, and methodology must be obtained before proceeding with the detailed investigation. The initiative for arranging a programme of meetings for supervision rests with you and your supervisor. (Refer also to the assessment scheme in the Student Handbook).

7. WORK ON THE DISSERTATION BEFORE THE FINAL YEAR

The point of selecting a dissertation subject during the last term of the second year is to give you an opportunity to spend time during the vacation thinking about the dissertation and carrying out a certain amount of the investigative work. Some research for example, may require investigative work over the summer vacation. Whether the investigative work involves a portion of the literature search, or the collection of case study material and other data will depend upon many factors, such as the subject under review and the ease of access to data. Your dissertation module is worth double credits and therefore important towards your degree classification, so working on this in the summer before this year will be a significant benefit.

8. STARTING BACK IN THE FINAL YEAR

Prior to the start of the final year, dissertation information sessions will be staged – attendance is mandatory as several generic issues will be covered and guidance provided. Following this session, you will have first formal meetings with your supervisors, and then agree a forward plan for ongoing, regular meetings. Apart from reporting progress on the dissertation and identifying what you will be doing in the next week or so, you should agree with the supervisor a mutually convenient time for meeting regularly.

Please note that it is the student's responsibility to make contact, not the supervisors. You must take the initiative and be pro-active in getting the supervisor to discuss problems on which you require advice. This is an essential requirement with all dissertations: the learning process is student-centred. Meetings will ideally occur on a weekly basis, although some supervisors might take the view that fortnightly meetings are sufficient. Supervisors reserve the right to contact the dissertation coordinator in cases where students fail to make adequate contact.

Throughout the investigative work you need to keep in mind the fact that you will ultimately produce a written dissertation which will be bound and submitted to the Department Secretary. Hence, from the earliest stage of the investigation it is important that you consider the criteria which will be used to assess the final dissertation. These criteria are discussed in the next section of this learning text.

9. CRITERIA USED TO ASSESS A DISSERTATION

At a very early stage in the investigation process you should familiarise yourself with the criteria which will be used eventually to assess your dissertation. Later, at regular intervals, you should review the criteria. Failure to do this may result in some of your work being abortive and lead to a poor final assessment. Spending time considering the

assessment criteria will ensure that you are aware of the characteristics to be looked for in a good honours degree dissertation.

It is important to realise that the following criteria are not subject specific and apply to all dissertations.

9.1 Dissertation Criteria

- (a) Clear statement of the focus / area / topic / problem / hypothesis.
- (b) Substantive review of the relevant literature. Good relation of theory and literature to the actual research being undertaken, including justification of research topic / setting(s) programme.
- (c) Choice / review of appropriate research method(s), setting(s) and programme.
- (d) Use of primary and secondary source material.
- (e) Appropriate and sufficient collection and clear presentation of data.
- (f) Thoroughness of critical analysis and evaluation of the research, with clear and detailed reference to data and to literature, appropriate theories and explanations, and some appraisal of validity and value.
- (g) Sensitivity to problems and processes of research undertaken, e.g., ethics, communication, negotiation, collaboration, dissemination.
- (h) Substantial conclusion, raising key issues and points, with suggestions for future research / practice as appropriate.
- (j) Full, accurate bibliography and appropriate referencing of information.
- (k) Appendices as appropriate.

9.2 Assessment Scheme

- Assessment will be carried out by the dissertation supervisor, and another independent examiner.
- The aggregate will be the final project mark after a meeting between the 2 examiners.
- A third marker will be included in the case of a disagreement.
- To pass this module a minimum of 40% must be obtained.
- Assessment will be based upon the student's aptitude for research and performance throughout the research programme.
- Primary data collection is a prerequisite of a successful dissertation.

The weighted module performance criteria:

Interim presentation (pecha kucha)	5%
Poster presentation	10%

These are separately assessed presentations, forming 15% of the total mark.

Structure	10%
Literature review	10%
Research methodology	10%
Concept development & planning	10%
Analysis & evaluation of results	30%
Accuracy of abstract & conclusions	20%
Referencing	10%
Total	100%

The written piece of work is assessed using the following criteria: the mark will then form 85% of the total module mark.

The module criteria referencing grading profile are as follows:

GRADING: CRITERIA	3rd (35% - 49%)	2·2 (50% - 59%)	2·1 (60% - 69%)	1st (70% and over)
STRUCTURE	Meaning not always clear, partially gets to the point	Meaning generally clear with points illustrated	Meaning clear and fluent with logical flow	Very fluent, concise with clear logical flow
LITERATURE REVIEW	Sufficient description of research area and aims	Clear description of the research background, hypotheses and setting	Consistent and logical introduction of the research and the significance of the hypotheses	Set the research in a very coherent form and effectively show the significance of the hypotheses for the academic community

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY	Sufficient description of an appropriate methodology	Wider reading demonstrated of relevant methodology	Identification and application of current research into topic	Wide-ranging use of appropriate and imaginative research methodology
CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING	Limited appreciation of issues and consideration given to structure and format	Clear understanding of issues and structured presentation	Rational and logical understanding of issues and corresponding presentation	Thorough, logical understanding leading to insights and clear critical thinking of the literature in the context of the research
ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF RESEARCH	Some critical analysis and application	Some analysis, application and synthesis of appropriate primary research	Application, analysis and evaluation of appropriate primary research	Evaluation of research used to develop new concepts and contribute to the academic debate
ACCURACY OF ABSTRACT & CONCLUSIONS	Abstract not relevant, conclusions vague, no links back to literature	Abstract partly relevant, conclusions link back to some literature only	Accurate, clear linkage to literature, conclusions clear	Highly accurate, thorough linkages to literature and well described and reasoned conclusions
REFERENCING	Limited use of referencing	Use of appropriate referencing system	Consistent use of referencing system	Consistent and accurate use of an appropriate referencing system

10. CAUTIONARY COMMENTS

After close consideration of the criteria used to assess dissertations, you should now be better able to judge what will be required in the finished product. However, it may be useful to contrast the listed criteria with a description of what a few students in the past have thought as being appropriate in a dissertation.

Although, the number of such students is reducing, it is occasionally apparent that an odd student perceives the “dissertation” as being simply an extensive review of a subject, well-illustrated with photographs and drawings, or an interesting case study. In the last case, the result may be a well-written general report with few if any conclusions.

In these cases, there are no problems or questions defined at the outset, prior to an investigation, acquisition of evidence, the analysis of data, synthesis of solutions and production of conclusions referring to sources of error. Unfortunately, however interesting the end products are, the above remain reviews - not honours dissertations. Thus, at a very early stage with your supervisor, make sure you are investigating a problem, not reviewing a situation.

Secondly, some students include in dissertations many pages of elementary information of the sort found in standard textbooks. If this was all that was required, students could complete much of a dissertation in a very short period. Hence: avoid putting basic information in a dissertation - even if you need initially to learn or re-learn about basic

principles. You can refer to basic principles in a sentence and / or refer to a chapter in a standard textbook. The cautionary note here is that honours degree dissertations are written to be read by people who are technically informed about basic principles and wish to explore in depth a clearly defined problem.

A final cautionary note!

A first-degree dissertation is not an MSc, an MPhil or a PhD! You should not attempt at first degree level to investigate a problem which other authorities or practitioners have not already explored to a certain extent and about which data cannot be found in professional journals. Expect to provide your own personal contribution partly through obtaining primary data case studies, laboratory investigations, calculations, some computer applications, etc., linked to an in-depth discussion of existing theory. It is a good idea to keep your own conclusions to the end - this is your opportunity to have an opinion based upon objective data. Up to that point have references for all statements made.

11. INITIAL PROBLEMS

The following notes are intended for students who have just selected a broad subject area as the basis of their dissertation, but who have not yet had time to plan how they might start to investigate the subject.

Experience has shown that most students choose the topic of their intended dissertation / investigative project with little awareness of the academic depth in the subject or any real idea about whether it will make a good dissertation topic. Many students are inclined to choose a topic which they like or about which they have some preliminary opinions. By the time the dissertation is finished, most students acknowledge that the content is quite different from what was envisaged at the start.

The first advice for any student is: do not be concerned at the beginning about the fact that you know little about a subject or because you are not sure that you like the subject. In an objective investigation, it is often better starting with an acknowledgement of initial ignorance. Also, investigations take shape as they progress - they generate interest as they proceed. Once you have selected a topic, stick with it!

Accepting that you know very little about the subject, commence a literature search. This does not mean consulting general textbooks but using the library to search out articles in professional journals, newspapers, etc., which deal with aspects of the subject under investigation. Consult the library staff if you cannot remember how to carry out a literature search. Note Athens, inter-library loans and access to other libraries. Be wary of sources; make sure that those you use are credible. If your sources of information are largely web-based, you need to look more broadly.

Initially, make notes or obtain photocopies of articles and keep them in a file, electronic or otherwise. As you progress, analyse the contents of the articles, etc., and separate them into groups. The groups may either parallel your initial ideas about how the subject can be sub-divided or become obvious from the contents of the articles. Keep the groups of articles separate and attempt to build up the contents of each file. Do not at this stage attempt to start writing any chapters.

It is not too difficult to predict that after a while you will be surprised at the volume of information associated with your subject and the range of issues which you have

discovered. Your files will soon indicate enough subject matter for several dissertations. This stage should be reached ideally well before you start the final year, although the stage may be extended during the first few weeks back at the University.

Once you have reached this stage, with your supervisor:

Attempt to separate your files into aspects where:

- (i) There are both clear indications of problems (questions to be investigated and answered) and evidence of accessible information.
- (ii) Areas which might be interesting but where there is little hope of obtaining data, for example, where private companies would have to give you classified information.
- (iii) Note areas where little information can be found.

In consultation with your supervisor, narrow down the subject to include only aspects in (i) above.

The above stage should be completed before and evidenced within the submitted synopsis. You should also be able to indicate clearly how you are going to provide the personal input, e.g., by laboratory experiment, interview, work on computers, calculations, questionnaires (careful here), case studies, analysis of complex problems, etc.

The secret is to establish a framework of objectivity. Do not try to impose your ideas on the subject. Let the evidence determine the shape of the investigation. First become very knowledgeable about what the experts in the field think about the subject. What problems do they identify as being important? Do their opinions differ? How and why? How can you investigate some aspect of the problems, for example, in Swansea?

As your knowledge increases, so does your interest in the subject being investigated - whatever the topic.

12. SOURCE MATERIALS FOR DISSERTATIONS

Source materials for honours investigative projects can be classified as being on three levels: primary, secondary, and tertiary. It is important that you appreciate the relative academic merit of each type of source and where and when to use each.

Primary sources are sources of evidence obtained first hand by the researcher and will allow you to provide unique data towards the investigation.

Primary sources may include:

- * Data from interviews and questionnaires (only if necessary and subject to staff approval).
- * Original documents and drawings.
- * Calculations from first principles.
- * Data produced by laboratory investigations.
- * Many computer program applications;
- * Case study material.
- * Photographs taken by yourself.

These sources must be referenced, as with other sources.

Secondary sources may include:

- * Reports by authorities, e.g.
British Standards
British Research Establishment
- * Government statistics.
- * Research papers.

Essentially, secondary sources include any material which was produced first-hand by some other person or persons and where you are only once removed from the data.

Tertiary sources include most textbooks, including many very good works.

This includes any material where the author has relied upon secondary source or other tertiary source material. Web sites also are acceptable but restricted to no more than 25% if used as a reference source.

13. SOURCE MATERIALS: Comments on their Selection and Use

From a research point of view, tertiary source material is suspect and cannot normally be considered as reliable evidence. With tertiary material, you are relying upon your interpretation of somebody else's interpretation of original data. There are now too many potential sources of error for the final interpretation to be reliable.

With secondary source material, you rely on somebody else's interpretation of the evidence (even if they appear authoritative).

Primary sources are best because they are first-hand (i.e. either collected or calculated / taken by yourselves).

In an honours degree dissertation, the object should be to seek to obtain only reliable data. Secondary source material is essential to identify what original researchers or practitioners say on a subject.

The use of tertiary sources should be limited to introductory background reading. For example, there is no place for Goudie (Geography/Conservation) or Walker (Project Management) as source material for honours dissertations - although both books may be excellent introductory texts. Both are typical tertiary sources.

Please take care with grey literature – this is defined as literature that is “*produced on all levels of government, academics, business and industry in print and electronic formats, but which is not controlled by commercial publishers*” (GL99 Conference Program, 1999). Whilst useful sources, these should ALWAYS be backed up by appropriately reviewed sources.

14. REFERENCE LIST

All statements, opinions, conclusions, statistical facts etc., which are taken from another author's work must be acknowledged, whether they are quoted directly, paraphrased or summarised. Your dissertation needs to use the Harvard system of referencing. A guidance note on how to reference any type of information or media is provided on Moodle; you can use software to help you but a note of caution – these pieces of software

will only develop references based upon the information inserted into them. However, here are a few points which are often only used in dissertations.

14.1 Citing verbal sources

You may wish to refer to information gained from lecture courses, interviews or even casual conversations with informed persons. Give the surname of the person concerned, followed by date, in the text as for a printed source. Give a full reference at the end – it is simpler to compile a separate list of such sources to follow the bibliography.

Formal lectures and speeches

Lecturer's name (Year): *Course Title*, Location/Institute, Day, Month (if available), e.g.

Grieve, N (1994): ***MSc European Urban Conservation 2: Building Conservation***, University of Dundee, 26 February.

Or for one-off addresses, e.g. on the field trip,

Speaker's name (Year): *Title of Speech/Occasion*, Location, Day, Month, e.g.

Barenson, B (1997): ***Conservation Practice in Brugge: Address to MSc Students***, Brugge, 2 April.

Formal interviews and telephone calls

Interviewee's Name (Year), Interviewee's Job Title: *Interview with Interviewer's name*, Location of interview, Day, Month, e.g.

Wave, W (1997), Conservation Officer: ***Interview with AC Cumming***, Planning Department, City of Delft, Netherlands, July 17.

Church, V (1994), Chairman, Industrial Buildings Preservation Trust: ***Telephone conversation with AC Cumming***, June 19.

Casual conversation and incidental comments

This can be an individual question which you asked a speaker privately after they had delivered their formal address, or a remark made in an informal context. In this case, the reference in the body of your dissertation has the abbreviation pers. comm. After name and date (i.e. 'personal comment'), e.g.

. . . it is not expected that there will be any significant environmental policy change in the near future (Breeze 1996, pers. comm.)

Give the speaker's name and position/organisation in a list of verbal sources at the end of your work, e.g.

Breeze, D: Senior Inspector of Sustainable Buildings, Historic Scotland.

The abbreviation *Pers. Comm.* is particularly useful if you are quoting the personal opinion of an agency representative, rather than the official position of the organisation they represent. Be sure to include their authority / role / job title etc.

Broadcast media – television and radio programmes

Television and radio programmes are effectively a 'publication'.

To refer to a complete programme:

Production Company name, (Year programme made – it may be a repeat): *Title of Programme*, Medium/Channel, Day, Month, and Year of broadcast, e.g.

BBC North (1996): *York – A Return Journey*, BBC2, 8 January 1997.

To refer to an item in a magazine programme:

Contributor's name (Year): "Name of Item" *in* Production Company name, *Name of Programme*, Medium/Channel, Day, Month, Year of broadcast, e.g.

Stamp, G (1995): "The Legacy of Alexander Thompson" *in* BBC Scotland,

15. ILLUSTRATIONS

The sources of all illustrations, or the information used to compile graphs and tables, must also be referenced.

There should be a list of illustrations at the front of your dissertation, following the List of Contents. This should list figure number (in order), figure title, and page on which the illustration appears, e.g.

Figure 2 Parking Problems in the Historic Town Centre, Bath 34

The figure number and title must also appear next to the illustration where it appears.

The source of the illustration can be placed *either* in a list at the beginning of the work, usually after any written acknowledgements, *or* following the figure title where the figure occurs, e.g.

All photographs contained within this work were taken by the author, with the exception of Figure 17 (copyright York Archaeological Trust Ltd, used with permission), and Figures 24 and 25 (copyright John Brown).

Figure 17: Market Day in Bergen op Zoom, Zeeland (Photo by J Brown).

Photographs and Pictorial Drawings

When captioning photographs or drawings, give the name of the person or organisation holding the copyright to the illustration in brackets at the end of your caption. This may be the photographer or artist, but may be an archive, museum or art gallery, e.g.

Figure 3: The west front of Rouen Cathedral by Monet (National Museum of Wales, Cardiff).

Figure 7: Urban Renewal (JG Edwards/Times Newspapers Plc).

Maps

If you reproduce a map compiled by someone else, the cartographer or organisation holding copyright must be cited. This applies even if you have traced a base map and added your own information – you have used someone else's original survey data and this must be acknowledged, e.g.

Figure 1: Map of Yorkshire Showing Sustainable Case Study Locations (Based on Ordnance Survey Data).

Figure 2: Location of Conservation Areas in Halifax (Based on Ordnance Survey Sheet SH 47, additional data Calderdale District Council).

An old map may be treated as a book reference, if taken from a publication, or as an archive illustration from an unpublished or original copy, e.g.

Figure 4: Hampshire in the Eighteenth Century (Brown 1993).

Figure 5: John Speed's Map of Cheshire (British Museum).

In these cases, a full reference must be given in your end bibliography.

Graphs, Charts and Diagrams

You must cite the source of any data sets, even if you have drawn up a graph or diagram yourself. Similarly, if you give your own interpretation of a diagram or model, you must recognise the original author, e.g.

Figure 7: Frequency of Foundation of Industrial Museums in Britain (Data Source: National Museums Association 1996).

Figure 8: The Conservation Process: A Model (After Dobby, 1978).

If the Harvard format is used, every reference, apart from legal references or unnamed items in journals, must be included in the reference list. These must be in alphabetical order, with works from the same source in date order.

16. THE USE OF ABBREVIATIONS IN A DISSERTATION

Many abbreviations and symbols are used.

When you intend to use abbreviations make sure the abbreviation is appropriate for your purpose.

However, even with well-known acronyms it is normally good practice to write the name in full the first time you use it and put the acronym in brackets after the name. Subsequently, the acronym can be used throughout the text.

Where there are many acronyms in your dissertation, it is also good practice to include a list of acronyms/abbreviations at the start of your dissertation.

17. WRITING STYLE FOR DISSERTATIONS

Dissertations should be written in a style which would be appropriate for publication in a professional journal.

While maintaining a degree of formality in the form of writing, you should attempt to produce a relaxed highly readable but objective style.

It is generally agreed that technical dissertations should be written in the third person, mainly to avoid an excessive use of “I” and “my” in the text. However, much depends upon an author’s ability to communicate and it would be wrong to suggest that the use of first person singular is always correct.

Avoid colloquial expressions, slang, or a style that attempts to be an extension of everyday speech.

17.1 Style

English

The literary style adopted must be suitable to your purposes. Avoid the use of the first person, e.g. *‘I investigated the following points . . .’*, should be phrased as *‘the following points were investigated . . .’*. It is also modern practice to avoid the automatic adoption of the masculine pronoun for genderless roles.

Sentence Length

Ideally you should be concise, succinct and informative. Above all, you should aim to be clear. Clarity is often lost by using long sentences or inappropriate words. The average length of a sentence should usually be around 17-20 words, and sentences exceeding 30 words become difficult to grasp. Try to keep your sentences within these limits, but at the same time use flexible and varied sentence lengths to prevent the style becoming stilted.

Further guidance on this topic will be found in the recommended books at the end of these notes.

Signposts in the Text

Headings and sub-headings should be used as guides so that the reader can quickly find a particular paragraph or section. They also aid concentration by reminding the reader of each section of the work.

Consult Turk & Kirkman (1988), or van Emden & Eastel (2001) for further guidance on the subject of style. These pointers apply equally to any of your written work and you should always aim to produce work which satisfies these criteria.

Do not be afraid to ask for guidance when you are writing your dissertation. Find someone who will help you to proof-read the typing because it is difficult to spot mistakes in your own work. Search out constructive criticism from your peers before you submit your work to help eliminate the worst errors, or simply ask your supervisor.

18. USE OF ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

It is customary for students to acknowledge support given by the dissertation supervisor and others who have given help during the preparation of the dissertation.

The standard advice is: Keep acknowledgements to a minimum. Restrict them to those who have given effective support.

With lecturers and people from industry, etc., make sure to double-check the following:

Spelling of names; correct initials; person's title.
Have you quoted the correct qualifications?
Have you got the correct Job Description?
Spelling of company names.

Acknowledgements must be both brief and formal.

19. SIZE OF DISSERTATIONS

Warning: Over-Size Dissertations Do Suffer A Loss Of Marks!

Current practice for this Dissertation is normally 10,000 words (+/- 10%).

The words include the introduction, main body and conclusions to the dissertation, but **not** the appendices, figures or reference / bibliography lists, or any tables included within the text.

Much of the skill in writing dissertations lies in editing draft notes and gradually distilling essential material, in addition to re-examining the structure and balance of the parts to keep them in proportion. You must expect to have to re-edit most chapters several times during the preparation of a dissertation.

Remember that all students develop skills progressively when writing dissertations and those early draft chapters are likely to be full of poor English and extraneous material. Some sections may even be of doubtful value, either requiring to be taken out or, in some cases, using as appendix material.

20. QUALITY IN INTERPRETATION OF DATA

Although any honours degree student should not need to be given the following advice, it is perhaps useful for all students as an aide-mémoire.

Quality in a dissertation often lies in the extent to which students can analyse data and identify sources of error or factors which may or may not affect the reliability or application of the results in practice. In this sense, it does not matter if an investigation fails to produce a clear answer, the quality can be identified in the way the variables are identified and explained. Given a well-argued case, it is perfectly reasonable for the final conclusions to indicate that certain questions cannot be answered fully, that the relevance of a case study is open to doubt or that a hypothesis has not been proved. This demonstrates the skills of **critical thinking** which are vital at this level.

21. STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATIONS

Although not rigid, a typically good dissertation may be structured as follows:

1. Title page:
2. Statement regarding copyright.
3. Table of contents, including: a list of illustrations, lists of figures, tables, appendices.

4. Acknowledgements.
5. Abstract (Summary of contents: 300 words max).
6. List of abbreviations used, including symbols and units of measure.
7. Introduction, including statement of aims, hypothesis and methodology.
8. Main body incorporating literature search and personal contribution (sectionalised or divided into chapters).
9. Conclusions, with recommendations for further research. This is where you state your own opinions based upon the validated data you have collected and analysed. This can include ideas for future work in the area.
10. Reference list. Also a bibliography if this is required.
11. Appendices.

It is typical for dissertations to begin new sections and Chapters on a fresh page.

22. CONTENTS OF DISSERTATION

22.1 General

This section gives general guidance on the contents of a dissertation. Generally, a dissertation will include at least five chapters:

- Chapter 1: Introduction
- Chapter 2: Literature review
- Chapter 3: Methodology
- Chapter 4: Results and discussion
- Chapter 5: Conclusions / Recommendations.

At the end of the whole work there should be a reference list, followed by any bibliography (if required). Please note that any sources of information used within the document must be listed as references; any sources of information used to widen reading and understanding but not used directly within the work should form a bibliography. Any appendices should come after the full bibliography.

Some students find that they need to include additional chapters. For example, a student writing about a specific industry or conservation technique may need to provide a separate chapter for context setting before discussing the specifics of the research work.

22.2 Introduction

Make sure that the readers of your work will be able to find the answers to these questions in Chapter 1:

- What was the purpose of the research?
- How was the topic chosen?
- What were the main aims and objectives of the research?

- What is the scope of the research project? What were the limitations of the work?
- How is the text arranged in the dissertation?
- Is there anything particular to note that will make it easier for the person reading your dissertation to follow the work (e.g. about the format of referencing, layout of charts etc.)?

If you wrote a good outline you should be able to use this as a basis for Chapter 1.

Remember that this is the introduction to your project, and not an introduction to the topic of your project.

22.3 Literature Review

Areas that the examiner will consider include:

- Providing an introductory paragraph which explains what is discussed in the chapter and why it is necessary to include this as part of the dissertation.
- Demonstrating that you conducted a *thorough* literature search and have read *widely*.
- Demonstrating that you have read *up to date* material.
- Summarising what you have read *thematically* (and not author by author).
- Highlighting *trends* in the discussion of your topic, for example, over time; by geography; by sector.
- Commenting on the *value* of what you have read (without discussing the actual topic).
- Organising your findings from the literature review to fit in with the *main themes* of your research project.
- Identifying *gaps* in the literature.
- Demonstrating that you *assimilated and understood* what you have read and what you have written.

22.4 Methodological Review

The Methodology chapter is used to justify the choice of methods employed during the research project. You need to demonstrate that you understand that there are different options for conducting research. Although much of this chapter focuses on data collection, it is also worth acknowledging the techniques used for the other activities related to the research project: literature searching, sampling strategy or case study selection and data analysis.

Make sure that the answers of most of the questions below can be found in Chapter 3:

Introduction to Chapter 3

- What does this chapter discuss?
- Why is it necessary to include this discussion in the dissertation?

Discussion of literature search technique

- Which secondary sources were used to identify material for Chapter 2?

Discussion of data required

- What was the purpose of collecting and analysing the data?
- Why was it interesting / useful to look at this topic?
- Can you summarise the basic questions the research set out to answer in a view straightforward statements?
- What role did the findings of the literature review have in determining the data collection requirements?
- Did you need to collect quantitative or qualitative data? Why / why not?

Discussion of alternative methods of data collection

- Which methods might have been appropriate for data collection (e.g., observation, questionnaire etc.)?
- What are the advantages and disadvantages of each of these methods of data collection with reference to your own research project?

Discussion of:

- The question content and data required
- Format of the questionnaire(s) / interview(s)
- Phrasing of the questions
- Response formats
- Data collection method
- Data analysis technique

Review of the methodology used for the research

- Did you encounter any problems with the methodology implemented? What were these?
- How could you have avoided these problems?
- If you were to run the project again what improvements would you make to the methodological approach adopted?
- How did your method rate for reliability and validity?

22.5 Results and Discussion

Areas the examiner will consider include:

- Providing an introductory paragraph which explains what is discussed in the chapter.
- Discussing your results with reference to the findings of the literature review – this will necessitate a degree of repetition, which can be minimised by good cross-referencing. The reader expects you to match your own results against what was established in the literature review. From this you should make comments and draw conclusions.
- Writing thematically – in the majority of cases this means following a structure determined by the arrangement of themes in the literature review (and replicated in Chapter 1 in the section on the aims and objectives of the research, and the basic questions given in Chapter 3 in the discussion of data required). *It is not very sophisticated to take each questionnaire question and summarise the results the answers give you. Your questionnaire was*

designed so that the surveyed population was able to answer the questions: it was not designed to provide you with a thematic framework.

- Adding value to the results with your own comments.
- Highlighting and providing analysis of any new themes that have emerged from your own research.
- Recommendations.
- Providing a reference list.
- Statistical analysis (or equivalent) and evaluation (Very Important!)

22.6 Conclusion

This should be a conclusion to the whole project (and not just the research findings). Check that your work answers the following questions:

- Did the research project meet its aims / hypotheses / objectives (check back to introduction for stated aims)?
- What are the main findings of the research?
- Are there any recommendations?
- Do you have any conclusions on the search process itself?
- Where should further research be focused?

Provide a reference list here if required.

Headings

Each chapter should be given a number (1, 2, 3 etc.) and a short title which generally indicates the content of the chapter. Within each chapter there may be many distinct elements. For these, decimal sub-notation should be used (1.1, 1.2, 1.3 etc.). It is advisable not to go to more than three sub-levels. A useful framework for chapters is to write them as mini essays, i.e., an introduction, a main body and a conclusion that leads into the next chapter.

Quotations

The representation of work of any other person, including other students, member of staff or other institution, must always be fully acknowledged in the text. Where verbatim copying of another's work is included in the text this must be within quotation marks. Any quotation of more than a single line should be shown separated from the main text and indented at both margins.

The source of all quotations must be fully acknowledged and cited correctly, including the page number from which the quotation has been copied. Close paraphrasing of another's work is to be fully acknowledged; this includes simply changing a few words or the order of presentation of a passage. Large sections of close paraphrasing are not acceptable within the text. Any paraphrasing or quotation extending beyond a paragraph will be treated as plagiarism under the university regulations. (Refer to Faculty guidelines and ask your supervisor for any clarification)

Appendices

An appendix may be considered as an extended footnote, i.e. a section which expands an area of the text that cannot be conveniently included within the text. Appendices, if used, are usually given a letter (A, B, C etc.) and should also be given a title indicative of their contents.

Typically, an appendix would contain detailed original information or comment upon some aspect of the work, the detailed data from which conclusions have been drawn in the text,

or worked examples. Appendices should appear at the end of the work. Do not include in your appendices information that is readily available elsewhere. The requirement that the dissertation should be your own original work applies to appendices as well as to every other part of the work. Appendices may include computer printouts and data, manufacturers' data, statistical method summaries, questionnaire schedules, interview transcripts, etc.

Glossary

If there is a glossary, it should follow the text and any appendices. The glossary should define the large number of different technical terms and acronyms used in the text.

23. SUBMISSION / PRESENTATION OF DISSERTATION

The Dissertation is **normally** required to be submitted in the 3rd term of your final year (though this may not be the case for students who start later than the 1st semester, please check with your supervisor).

Late submission may not be accepted. Any late submissions will be discussed by the next available extenuating circumstances panel following hand-in, so you will need to apply for extension by the deadline stated above. Please note NO extensions can be given before this date and can only be agreed by the extenuating circumstances panel. Students may care to note that there is no necessity to wait until the very final moment to hand in their work!

We will only be asking for electronic hand-ins. Therefore, please submit to Moodle by the deadline (date and time) stated. Please note, Turnitin is an internationally used piece of software and is can therefore not be stable all the time. Please avoid submissions close to the deadline time to be on the safe side.

The script must be typed or word-processed. Typing in the main text should be 1.5 spacing (except quotations which should be single-spaced and may be underlined). Acknowledgements may be single-spaced.

A4 size paper is to be used. The text should leave margins of 20 mm, with a margin of 40 mm to the left margin where binding will take place.

We will be inviting you to provide an interim presentation on your work; the timing of this is yet to be confirmed although this is likely to take place before Christmas. This presentation (max. of 5 minutes) should provide:

- An overview of the aims of your work
- Your objectives
- The methodology you intend to use and why

You will be provided with feedback following this presentation.

You will then carry out a poster presentation; again, the timing of this will be confirmed, although this is likely to occur after the May exams. Further details on this will be provided closer to the time; however, you will be asked to develop an academic poster of your work and present this for no longer than 5 mins (plus questions).

Both presentations are assessed, and attendance is mandatory.

24. COPYRIGHT OF THE DISSERTATION

On the page following the title page a statement should be provided regarding copyright and an author declaration; both forms will be available on Moodle and should be included in the hard copy ONLY.

This formalises a long-established principle that the copyright of dissertations rests with the University of Wales Trinity St David.

The standard page to insert into the work is available on Moodle under Guidance notes.

The standard statement and any additional clauses affecting copyright should be followed by the student's signature and be dated.

25. PROOF READING

This is very important in any dissertation and should be carefully done by you, a contact or a professional. You should also consider asking your supervisor to assist in proofreading – giving your supervisor plenty of warning as they are likely to be assisting many students across the school.

26. SUPERVISION OF YOUR DISSERTATION

Your initial proposal will be examined, and you will be placed with an appropriate supervisor who will have the relevant experience in your chosen subject. Your supervisor will be responsible for guiding you through the development of your dissertation to the final hand-in. It is important that you regularly meet with your supervisor to ensure progress is being made and you can meet the deadlines agreed during the development of your research.

Finally...Good luck!

And remember, the ACE team is here to support you with this work, so please continue to engage with the staff, especially your supervisor, and make them aware of any concerns or issues you may have, as and when they emerge.