# Master of Business Administration

# Part II Level 7
# Dissertation Handbook

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

It is a prerequisite of this module that students attend a series of Research Methodology workshops and as a result have produced a successful research proposal for a dissertation. The workshops are intended to prepare students for the requirements of independent research and to enhance their professional competencies necessary for this purpose. This will ensure that students will:

- have developed a clear focus for their research, inquiry or investigation;
- have identified the context, boundaries and stakeholder interests;
- have considered research perspectives and ethical concerns and procedures
- have considered research perspectives and ethical concerns and procedures; are informed about data collection and analysis and are in a position to successfully complete their research project

All students must write their **Research Proposal** and **Dissertation**. Students will be given guidance in the Research Methods workshops and, following the Research Proposal submission, on the parameters of the specialist themes.

Once the Research Proposal has been successfully completed, the dissertation module provides the student with the necessary support and opportunity to produce a substantial specialist body of research (15,000 words) which has been instigated, developed and produced as a consequence of their own research initiative.

Only on the successful completion of Part 1 (i.e. 6 taught modules) and the research proposal, will the student be formally invited to submit a dissertation.

Writing a Dissertation is one of the most creative challenges of this postgraduate programme. It offers students the opportunity to prove that they have the ability to implement the knowledge they have acquired throughout their studies and to carry out in-depth research into a topic of their choice related to the aims of the programme, under the guidance of a supervisor.

The purpose of a Dissertation must be clear and provide answers to the following:

1. Why the chosen topic is important from an academic point of view?
2. Why the topic is of interest from a practical point of view?
3. What are the benefits to the academic as well as the business world?

The Dissertation should include some original contribution to knowledge. This can be limited but must demonstrate your ability to critically evaluate the academic literature, collect data systematically, organise your findings, and ensure that your research results are presented in a logical and clear manner.

The Dissertation should demonstrate both the technical knowledge that you have acquired throughout your Masters programme and also the ability to integrate knowledge from different subject areas in order to apply it analytically to an academic but business-related problem.

Dissertations are expected to be of high academic standards. On its completion the dissertation should convey the message of the research succinctly and clearly. Attention must be paid to the structure, syntax and grammar of the dissertation. Poor syntax, poor grammar, spelling and syntax errors, lack of structure, or inaccuracies in the tools, data or references are important dissertation weaknesses. The content and arguments

must flow logically and consistently throughout the dissertation and must be relevant to the topic. The use of tabulations and illustrations such as figures and tables is encouraged, as visual means that support and reinforce the arguments.

A dissertation should be solely the outcome of work carried out by the student. Further, the Masters dissertation must be written in English.

If you are unfortunately unsuccessful with the original submission of your dissertation and it does not achieve the pass mark of 50%, the Exam Board may offer you the opportunity for a resubmission. In such an event, the dissertation can be resubmitted within a maximum of 12 months from the original submission. You can only resubmit your dissertation once.

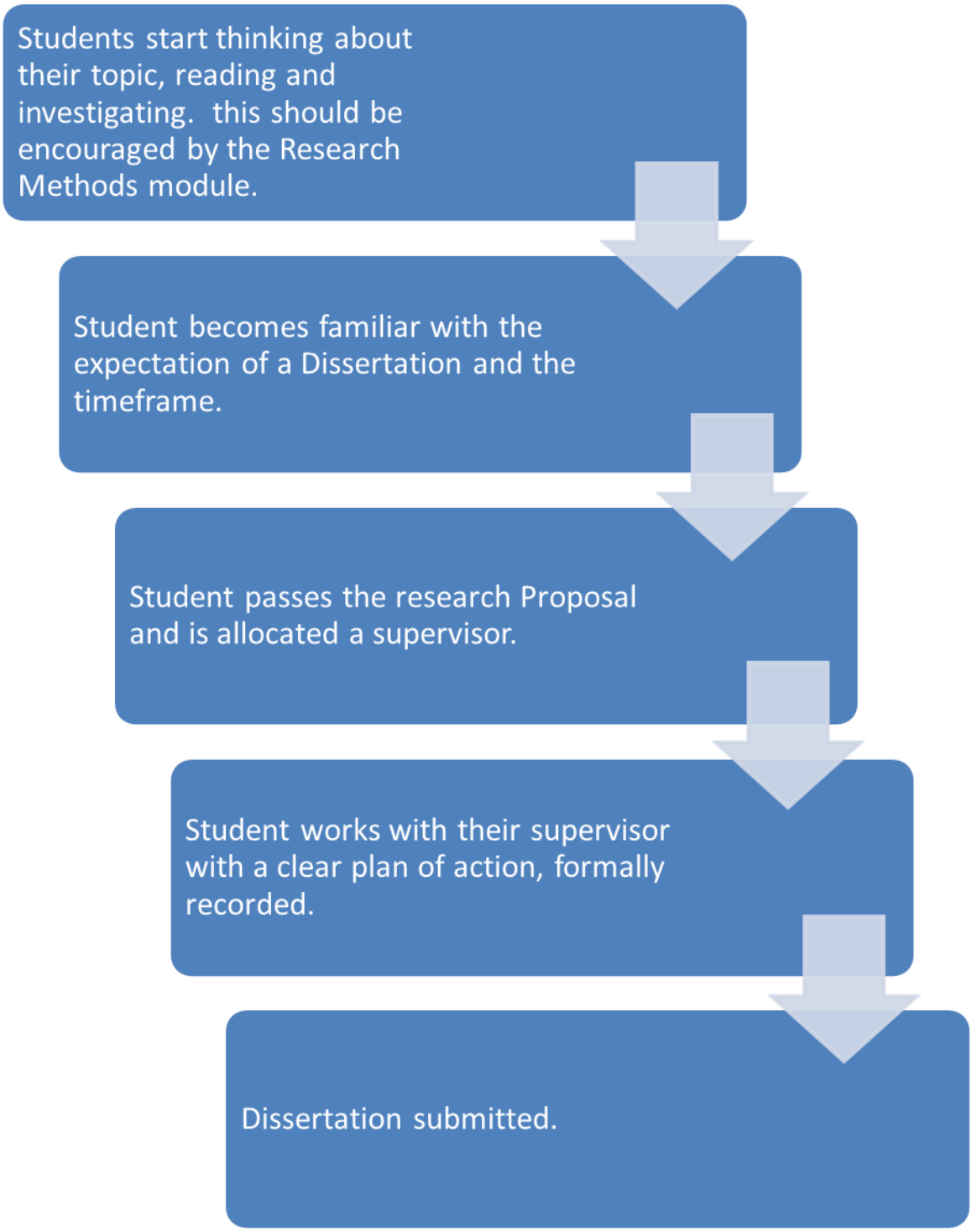
## 2 CHOOSING A SUITABLE TOPIC FOR THE DISSERTATION

Look at the modules you have studied so far. Think about topic management issues. Consider your future career plans. Read and talk to friends and academic staff. It is important to select a topic that really interests you, and that is directly connected to your programme of study.

When you have a broad area of interest, you then need to focus in to find a narrow and specific topic that will be manageable within the time and resource constraints of the Masters Dissertation. Think of appropriate limitors – type of company, country, sector and time period. At this stage is it often useful to discuss your ideas with one or more academic members of staff. Think about the feasibility of your idea. Will there be good information sources (books, papers etc.) available? Will access to primary research information sources be straightforward? Is this a topic to which you can bring your own individual perspectives?

The choice of a topic can be crucial to the success of a dissertation and you should spend some time and effort in choosing the topic carefully. The key point is that the dissertation must focus on a topic that is closely related to your Master's degree programme; if in doubt, consult a member of teaching staff for your programme as early as possible or seek an appointment with your Programme Director or the Level 7 Dissertation Manager.

## STAGES IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF A DISSERTATION



## 3 THE RESEARCH PROPOSAL

**Constructing a Research proposal**
Before writing the proposal you should carefully consider research methodologies, access to information and any relevant issues related to ethics. The proposal should also include a preliminary literature survey, which demonstrates how you intend to link the research literature with your own research. A timetable must be attached to the proposal. On the basis of the research proposal a relevant supervisor will be allocated in order to reflect the specific area of focus of the Dissertation and provide effective and knowledgeable support.

**Preparing a Research Proposal**
Research skills are a vital prerequisite of postgraduate studies. In the first instance a successful dissertation is founded on a clear understanding of the research process and its application. Secondly, the skills developed help in the vocational world in relation to independent and critical thinking within the construction industries. Hence, this research methods module will form the basis from which your understanding of the research process is based.

**What are Research Proposals?**
Research proposals serve a number of purposes. Among them:

- They convince others that your research is worth undertaking.
- They enable you to demonstrate expertise and competency in your particular area of study.
- They may serve as a contract between the researcher and her funders.
- They serve as a planning tool for the researcher.
- They serve as a form of assessment for research courses.

**How to Write a Research Proposal?**

Most students and beginning researchers do not fully understand what a research proposal means, nor do they understand its importance. To put it bluntly, one's research is only as a good as one's proposal. An ill-conceived proposal dooms the dissertation.

A research proposal is intended to convince others that you have a worthwhile research project and that you have the competence and the work-plan to complete it. Generally, a research proposal should contain all the key elements involved in the research process and include sufficient information for the readers to evaluate the proposed study.

Regardless of your research area and the methodology you choose, all research proposals must address the following questions:

1. What you plan to accomplish?
2. Why you want to do it?
3. How you are going to do it?

The proposal should have sufficient information to convince your marker that you have an important research idea, that you have a good grasp of the relevant literature and the major issues, and that your methodology is sound.

The quality of your research proposal depends not only on the quality of your proposed dissertation, but also on the quality of your proposal writing. A good research project may run the risk of rejection simply because the proposal is poorly written. Therefore, it pays if your writing is coherent, clear and compelling.

The following offers a framework for preparing your Dissertation Research proposal, and for discussion with your supervisor. Write in the spaces shown.

**Title**

In your research proposal, have you provided evidence that you have thought about the area you wish to investigate? The title and topic area should be relevant to your Masters programme. The topic should be something that interests you, since you will have to concentrate on it for many weeks. You must choose a subject on which you can easily acquire primary information (documents, interviews, questionnaires, etc.) and for which there is a body of academic literature to investigate and synthesise when identifying research questions. It should be concise and descriptive. For example, the phrase, "An investigation of . . ." could be omitted. Often titles are stated in terms of a functional relationship, because such titles clearly indicate the independent and dependent variables. However, if possible, think of an informative but catchy title. An effective title not only pricks the reader's interest, but also predisposes him/her favourably towards the proposal.

**Key Questions**

Have you thought in depth about the key research question you will address? It is important that you have gone further than just picking a generic topic area to be researched, and that you have decided which aspect of the topic you might investigate in detail. It is important to try to make this process as specific as possible. Narrow questions are easier to investigate successfully; a broad topic may evoke so many conflicting issues that giving an adequate amount of attention to all of them in the time available might be impossible. However, please note that too narrow a topic may mean that the Dissertation will lack empirical breadth or analytical depth.

What is the main aim of your research? Write one or two sentences that summarise the overall objective of your Dissertation

Identify the research questions that flow from this main research aim. You need to ask yourself if you can find answers easily to them. Can you get access to information that can lead to possibly answering the questions raised? If the answer is 'no', then you need to identify questions where more information is available. This is a small scale research project and you should come up with suitable questions.

**Background**

What is the background to your interest in this topic area and in pursuing this research area? Summarise briefly the reasons why this topic is likely to be of interest to the business community and also why it is of interest to you.

The main purpose of the introduction is to provide the necessary background or context for your research problem. How to frame the research problem is perhaps the biggest problem in proposal writing.

If the research problem is framed in the context of a general, rambling literature review, then

the research question may appear trivial and uninteresting. However, if the same question is placed in the context of a very focused and current research area, its significance will become evident.

Unfortunately, there are no hard and fast rules on how to frame your research question just as there is no prescription on how to write an interesting and informative opening paragraph. A lot depends on your creativity, your ability to think clearly and the depth of your understanding of problem areas.

Some considerations:

1. Try to place your research question in the context of either a vogue area, or an older area that remains viable.
2. Brief but appropriate historical backdrop.
3. The contemporary context in which your proposed research question occupies the central stage.
4. Identify "key players" and refer to the most relevant and representative publications.
5. In short, try to paint your research question in broad brushes and at the same time bring out its significance.

The introduction typically begins with a general statement of the problem area, with a focus on a specific research problem, to be followed by the rational or justification for the proposed study. The introduction generally covers the following elements:

1. State the research problem, which is often referred to as the purpose of the study.
2. Provide the context and set the stage for your research question in such a way as to show its necessity and importance.
3. Present the rationale of your proposed study and clearly indicate why it is worth doing.
   I. Has the study been done before?
   II. Will the study benefit patients advance understanding or influence policy?
4. Briefly describe the major issues and sub-problems to be addressed by your research.
5. Identify the key independent and dependent variables of your experiment. Alternatively, specify the phenomenon you want to study.
6. State your hypothesis, theory, (Please do not confuse the hypothesis with the statistical null hypothesis.)
7. Set the boundaries of your proposed research in order to provide a clear focus.
8. Provide definitions of key concepts. (Wong, 2005) (Calgary University, 2004)

**Literature Review**

In this section of the research proposal, you need to outline which previous research has been done on the topic and how it has guided or informed your research. You also need to include a theoretical framework that relates to the research area you are looking at.

The literature review serves several important functions:

1. Gives credits to those who have laid the groundwork for your research.
2. Demonstrates your knowledge of the research problem.

3. Demonstrates your understanding of the theoretical and research issues related to your research question and their relative significance.
4. Shows your ability to critically evaluate relevant literature information.
5. Indicates your ability to integrate and synthesise the existing literature.
6. Provides new theoretical insights or develops a new model as the conceptual framework for your research.
7. Convinces your reader that your proposed research will make a contribution to the literature.

Most students' literature reviews suffer from the following problems:

- Lacking organization and structure
- Lacking focus, unity and coherence
- Being repetitive and verbose
- Failing to cite influential papers
- Failing to keep up with recent developments
- Failing to critically evaluate cited papers
- Citing irrelevant or trivial references
- Depending too much on secondary sources
- Writing an essay
- Are written as a list
- Lack connections and linkages between sources and different sections

Your scholarship and research competence will be questioned if any of the above applies to your proposal.

There are different ways to organize your literature review. Make use of subheadings to bring order and coherence to your review. For example, having established the importance of your research area and its current state of development, you may devote several subsections on related issues as: *theoretical models, measuring instruments, etc*.

## Methodology

Here you explain in detail the what, why and how of the procedures you used in order to conduct your research.

As with the literature reviewed, the methodology selected will stem from the research questions you have chosen to answer. In answering any questions, as researchers we must be concerned with the validity of the answers we receive. Validity can be described by considering if we received the answer to the question we actually asked, or the answer to another question. Thus, an underage teenage boy asked by his parents at the end of a Friday evening "Have you been drinking?" will provide a different answer than if asked the same question by his peers. While the real answer may lie somewhere between the two scenarios, we cannot know where exactly, and so the approach used to answer this research question (face to face interviewing) can be considered invalid. An approach that is more likely to yield the true answer would be to follow the teenager and watch his actions (non-participant observation), although this has ethical considerations, but the answer would be valid.

The validity of the research can be threatened throughout a dissertation, but can be divided into three areas;

a. The research **design** can be invalid, as described above, where there is an inappropriate method used to elicit information. You should ask yourself if the research design enables the true answer to be revealed, or if other factors will distort and invalidate the answer received. Use the methodology chapter to explain why after considering other methods you settled for the one you did.

b. Validity can be threatened by the way the research is **administered**. A poorly constructed questionnaire can lead respondents to feel frustrated and give answers designed to end the interview as quickly as possible rather than the true answers. Inappropriate timing, asking the question of the wrong people and asking too much of respondents are all ways that validity is impinged upon. A pilot survey will often reveal if there are any such weaknesses and enable the research to be administered differently, strengthening the certainty of the worth of the final answers.

c. The final way that research can be invalidated is the research **analysis** techniques used. Most statistical tests are appropriate only if certain conditions are met. Thus, if the research produces parametric data, then using the non-parametric chi-squared test would invalidate your findings. Instead, the parametric analysis of variance (ANOVA) test may be appropriate if all other conditions are met. However, beyond the mechanics of statistical tests, common sense is required. If you have conducted a 50-person survey, then it is clearly invalid to conduct detailed statistical analysis and claim a spurious level of accuracy. You demonstrate a greater understanding of research by limiting your analysis to what can reasonably be supported. The same threat to validity exists in the conclusions that your dissertation draws. It is essential to acknowledge that your sample survey of four streets in Swansea for example, does not enable you to speak about all the residents of Swansea, or even all the residents of the streets you surveyed. <u>Be humble in your conclusions</u>.

All of these issues should be covered in the methodology chapter. It is also worth reiterating the research questions and hypothesis to re-assert the focus of the dissertation.

The ground rule is to describe your method in sufficient detail to allow the reader to replicate your study.

Include:

a.) A summary of research rationale/aim/objectives
b.) Research philosophy (e.g. positivism, phenomenology – or qualitative/quantitative)
c.) Research strategy (e.g. case study, experiment, survey, etc.)
Which one and why – justify your selection in the context of your own research.
d.) Data collection techniques (e.g. questionnaires, interviews, observation, etc.)

- Choice and why - justify your selection in the context of your own research.
- As a general guideline a qualitative methodology would normally expect to utilise at least 10-12 in depth interviews or equivalent.
- A quantitative survey on the other hand would expect to utilise perhaps 150-200 questionnaires or equivalent.
- Sample type (number in sample, population sample was taken from, manner in which sample was chosen biographical details, e.g. all male, education etc)

e.) Research Procedures/process (the step-by-step processes involved in the study including questionnaire/interview design and administration etc.)
f.) Validity, reliability and generalizability
g.) Data analysis Procedures

- Justify, using references to respected research methods authors, the selection of research methods used in your study.
- Throughout the chapter recognise and acknowledge the limitations of the research methods selected.

**Results**
Obviously you do not have results at the proposal stage. However, you need to have some idea about what kind of data you will be collecting, and what statistical procedures will be used in order to answer your research question or test you hypothesis.

**Evaluation**
It is important to convince your reader of the potential impact of your proposed research. You need to communicate a sense of enthusiasm and confidence without exaggerating the merits of your proposal. That is why you also need to mention the limitations and weaknesses of the proposed research, which may be justified by time and financial constraints as well as by the early developmental stage of your research area (Wong, 2005).

**Time scale**

You also need to think about the time scale for the Dissertation. When you are thinking about the data collection stage, allow ample time for time, as if you are trying to arrange interviews or to collect data from questionnaires, it can take longer than you think to organise!

**References**
Have you fully and clearly identified the major references? These should be listed using the Harvard System.

**RESEARCH ETHICS AND RISK ASSESSMENT**

Your research must give due respect to current research ethics which must ensure the consideration of the following issues:

- Scientific objectivity
- privacy-impartial reporting
- confidentiality
- findings reported fairly and accurately

It is absolutlely necessary to ensure that you have undertaken a risk analysis prior to commencing a research project at any level.

This concerns your own safety in all respects, and full security and ethical treatment of your subjects (sources of evidence, by interview, questionnaire survey, business, government and agency concerns as well the rights and regard of individuals who may be contacted or whose data may be used during the course of the project).

The information below requires you to think, to consider how your gathering of data, approaches and any use made of sources, and yourself may be influenced in the course of the work.

This includes

- respect for sources and their owners intentions and requirements for them, as well as
- your own personal safety and acknowledgement of the work of any contributors, and
- the respect for the anonymity of any providers of information as well as the
- acknowledgement where their permission to use their evidence has been
- agreed, and on what terms.

Please submit the UWTSD ethics form as a part of your research proposal. Check each item, consider its relevance.

Please seek advice from your supervisor if there are any queries.

Eg:

- You may be at risk in situations of meeting people.
- Others may be at risk in situations of your approraching them for data, and in terms of restricted information that you must only use on careful
- agreement with them.
- You must allow informants (subjects) to withdraw from investigations if they wish
- You must endanger neither yourself or your informants in the process of
- The work.
- You must not deceive any informants.

**NB:- ALL QUESTIONNAIRES THAT ARE BEING SENT EXTERNALLY SHOULD BE CHECKED AND HAVE THE PRIOR AUTHORITY OF THE DISSERTATION SUPERVISOR BEFORE BEING SENT OUT. THIS INCLUDES ONLINE QUESTIONNAIRES**

**ALL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS NEED TO BE CHECKED WITH YOUR SUPERVISOR**

## BEFORE YOU CONDUCT YOUR FIRST INTERVIEW

### Ethics research approval form

Using the ethics form, you must identify the main risk element regarding your health and safety and assess the potential risk. Risks may be categorised as tolerable, Moderate, substantial or severe. Indicate the actions that you have taken To reduce the risk and then indicate the residual risk.

- Tolerable risk is Acceptable.
- Moderate risk must be managed carefully.
- Substaintial or Severe risks which are serious and likely to heppen are not acceptable and you should not proceed.

## 4 THE MAIN RESEARCH PHASE

### The Dissertation

It is important to understand what needs to go into your Dissertation and how it should be structured. This will form an important part of the discussion with your supervisor and each project will be approached in its own unique way. However, it helps if you are clear in your own mind on the purpose of each chapter.

The Dissertation is usually divided into 5 chapters but this is not prescribed as long as all key sections are covered. Each chapter will have an introduction, a main body and a conclusion that leads the reader easily on to the next.

The sections you might typically find in a dissertation report are, as follows (note that the abstract should not be included in the word count):

| Chapter | Word count |
|---|---|
| **Introduction** | 2,250 to 2,500 words |
| **Literature Review** | 4,000 to 5,000 words |
| **Methodology** | 3,000 to 3,500 words |
| **Data analysis** | 3,000 to 3,500 words |
| **Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations** | 2,250 to 2,500 words |
| **Total word count** | 15000 words (+ / - 10%) |

**What should be included in these chapters?**

| Broad Sections | Main Aim of Each Chapter |
|---|---|
| **Introduction and background information** | A good introduction sets the tone and direction of the report. It informs the reader what the research is about, presents the overall research objective and specific research questions – |

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| | and why these have been selected and pursued. In particular, you need to make it clear what specific business related problem or issue is being addressed.<br><br>What does your project contribute to address this particular problem or issue? What contribution do you hope to make to help business with the problem or issue you have identified and addressed?<br>The introduction may also present and summarise the contents of the remaining sections to the reader.<br>The background information puts your work into a particular context and helps to explain the research.<br>For example, if your Dissertation is based on a particular company, you would describe the nature of the company and its organisation and then outline the background to the issue, situation or phenomena you were investigating. |
| **Literature Review** | A main aim of the literature review is to inform the reader what previous research has been done on the topic and how it has guided or informed your own research. For example, you may want to test or challenge findings from previous research, or approach your study from a different perspective. Or you may want to explore how relevant today are the conclusions reached from earlier studies both generally and for your own research?<br>It is also important to include the theoretical framework – the theory that is related to the research in question. |
| **Methodology** | The methodology section informs the reader what overall research methodology you adopted – and why - and what research methods you used to gain and analyse your result. It also describes the participants involved (how many/how they were selected/their characteristics etc). It is also an opportunity for you to present an objective reflection on the limitations of the methodology and methods used. This is important, as all research has its limitations and it will be expected of you. |
| **Data Analysis** | This section presents a summary of the data or other information you gathered. This section presents the data information without discussion of the implications of your findings - this goes into the next 'Discussion' section. |
| **Discussion, Conclusions and Recommendations** | This section presents analysis and discussions of the result, including implications, consequences and issues raised. It will also compare and contrast results with previous research findings, identified and discussed earlier in the Literature Review. It should include recommendations.<br>It is the end of your report, but, hopefully, the beginning of positive contribution to knowledge as a result of your work. This need not be on a grand scale; some of the best projects |

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| | focus on affecting small but important changes within the business concerned.<br>The conclusion to the report reminds the reader of the main aim of your research, your methodology, the findings and what this means for the business community or organisation studied.<br>You are also likely to point out the limitations of your research findings and how future researchers might take your work a stage further.<br>Finish well – leave the reader with something significant to think about. |

Once you have agreed the proposal with your supervisor, and your ethical form has been approved, you are ready to start work. You will find it helpful to keep in regular contact with your supervisor. The supervisor can direct you to relevant literature, encourage you to be reflective about your methodology and research instruments, and provide you with opportunities to discuss your developing research ideas.

A programme of individual face to face sessions with your supervisor and group refresher tutorials will denoted on the schedule you are given for the dissertation year.

## 5 DETAILED GUIDANCE FOR INDIVIDUAL CHAPTERS OF THE DISSERTATION

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| **Introduction** | Introduction of topic and context. This should include a clear research aim that frames the research.<br>Introduction of research objectives and research questions | |
| | The **research aim** has been defined as the overall broad intention of the project, and should be expressed using an infinitive verb – *to + action*. *The aim of this project is … to explore, to develop, to design, to investigate,… There is usually only one research aim but there can be more (a small number!)*<br><br>*The **objectives** are the steps how the aim can be achieved. They need to be SMART. Usually between 3-5, often presented as a bullet pointed or numbered list.*<br><br>The aim and objectives are used to develop **research questions** and/or hypotheses.<br><br>Terminology in different sources is not consistent, but the three levels should be recognised. Very useful explanation at:<br><br>https://patthomson.net/2014/06/09/aims-and-objectives-whats-the-difference/ | |
| | Introduction to the structure of the dissertation | |
| **Literature review/ context** | Present a structured, critical review of **current** and **seminal** literature review in the area chosen.<br>The purpose of a literature review is to provide:<br>• A critical discussion and analysis of the framework, concepts, models, or specific theories that underpin the study.<br><br>• The identification of key (seminal) theorists in the field who have conducted research in the area.<br><br>• A discussion of the relationship of each work to the others under consideration, including the exploration of conflicts amongst seemingly contradictory previous studies<br><br>• An identification of new ways to interpret prior research.<br>• The identification of any gaps that exist in the literature.<br>• Clarity about why additional research is needed<br><br>• Setting of own research within the context of existing literature [very important) | |
| | – Can include some secondary statistical data to give context but should not include any data that the student has collected themselves**.**<br>– Can include applied sample cases but the emphasis should be on academic underpinning of the research problem. | |
| | – Should use subheadings<br>– Limited if any use of bullet points.<br>– Often structured from wider context to narrower focus. | |

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| | – Should not be a descriptive list of small unrelated sections.<br>– Student needs to critique their own interpretation of material, presenting their rationale, so that the reader can follow their thinking. Creating a synthesis is, in effect, like building interpretation upon interpretation and requires sufficient supporting evidence.<br>– Needs to have a recognisable logical order to subsections<br>– Should not be presented in report format but as a coherent, flowing body of text that 'tells a story'.<br>– For quantitative work, the hypotheses need to be clearly stated in the appropriate sections of the literature review.<br>– Should end with a clear identification of the research gap and research question. |
| **Method-ology chapter** | – At the beginning, the research question identified in the previous chapter needs to be developed into an overall research objective<br>– Depending on the project, research aims or research questions need to be developed. **An overall research objective is not sufficient, it's too vague.**<br>– The method must be appropriate to fulfilling the overall aims of the study. |
| | – Identification of the research paradigm chosen, especially for dissertations which will receive high marks.<br>– A clear definition of the chosen research approach with a definition of exploratory, descriptive and causal research.<br>– Students may find the use of a framework for research such as the research onion Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) helpful as it (or other research models) provide a pathway through which a research methodology can be designed. Students should not be penalised if they rely on one of these models, but could lose marks if they misuse the model chosen, e.g. pick and choose only some elements that they like. |
| | – Clear distinction between secondary and primary research.<br>– Clear distinction between quantitative and qualitative research methods.<br>– Clear statement which will be used - it may be several – and why the choices are best for the project |
| | – Clear identification of research tools and justification of choices. Especially interviews and surveys need to be clearly differentiated and choices justified.<br>– Information on how the research instrument was developed, e.g. how were the questions for interviews developed, where do questionnaire questions come from etc.<br>– Detail is needed here, for example any problems that were anticipated and the steps that were taken to prevent them from occurring. |

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| | – PG research instruments should be piloted in all cases, if no pilot – mark loss.<br>– Sampling: Clear information on sampling population and sample size must be given here and students must provide a justification for subject selection and sampling procedure<br>– The choice of convenient sampling is discouraged or must be well justified.<br>– If friends/families are used as a sample, a sound rationale must be provided, convenience alone is not sufficient at this level.<br>– Sample size must be appropriate for the chosen tool and level of study.<br>**Guidelines for PG**:<br>(These are guidelines only – the quality of the sample may be more important than numbers<br>– Focus groups: Organise at least five, with the expectation that only three or four will work.<br>– General population interviews: 15 or more unless in-depth interviews<br>– In-depth or expert interviews: 3-5<br>– Interviews with government officials or very senior managers: 3 - 5<br>– Questionnaires:<br>No less than 40 (but this would be a very weak PG dissertation)<br>– Strong PG dissertations should have 120 + respondents<br>– Benchmark: A high end PG dissertation (75% +) should be of publishable standard for a peer reviewed academic journal. |
| | Details of the data collection need to be provided? Where? How? Many problems? If there were problems, what was done about them?<br>Students should avoid:<br>Irrelevant details<br>Unnecessary explanation of basic procedures<br>Problem blindness - It is very likely that students will encounter problems when collecting data. Students should not ignore these problems or pretend they did not occur. Documenting how they were overcame demonstrates to the reader that students can provide a cogent rationale for the decisions made to minimise the impact of any problems that arose. |

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| **Methodology chapter cont.** | Data analysis methods need to be explained.<br>The limitations of the chosen methods need to be clearly stated<br>A brief section on Ethics needs to be included<br>Ethical frameworks to be applied for the highest marks (see e.g. Seedhouse (1992), Flinders (1992).<br>All PG dissertations need to include a range of references to business/social science research methods.<br>Section on reliability - - it is important to always provide sufficient information to allow other researchers to adopt or replicate the methodology. This information is particularly important when a new method has been developed or an innovative use of an existing method is utilised.<br>Section on validity<br>Section on triangulation if appropriate<br>The difference to UG dissertations here lies in the level of detail provided and the more extensive use of references. |
| **Data analysis/ Findings (qualitative)** | The research objective and questions need to be restated at the beginning of the chapter.<br>Coding methods need to be explained.<br>Presentation of the findings according to the coding method chosen.<br>In qualitative dissertations, the **Findings** and **Discussion** chapters can be combined, this often flows much better.<br>The discursive elements should tie the results back to the literature review and include references.<br>The findings should include the presentation of **selected interview excerpts –** presented indented and single spaced.<br>All interview excerpts need to be identified by respondent (R1, R2, etc.)<br>There should be a table with demographic information of the respondents. This can be included in an Appendix.<br>A copy of the research instrument needs to be provided in an Appendix. If another language was used, both the original and the English versions need to be provided. |
| **Data analysis/ Findings (quantitative)** | This section should begin with descriptives<br>- A table of the demographics of the respondents with frequencies and percentages<br>- Tables of frequencies and percentages of any ordinal/categorical questions<br><br>Data analysis that only includes frequencies and percentages is not at PG level and such data analysis sections should be failed.<br>At the bare minimum, significant differences between different respondent groups and any questions with multiple answer possibilities should be analysed by using cross tabulations and chi-square analysis.<br>Students should be encouraged to learn how to use SPSS or another statistical package, or for the minimum, they could use an online chi-square calculator e.g. http://www.socscistatistics.com/tests/chisquare2/Default2.aspx<br>Across institutions it is a norm to require tests such as t-tests, ANOVA, correlations and regressions or non-parametric equivalents to be used for a distinction. Advice from additional staff members may need to be thought if these are to be used. |
| **Discussion** | The discussion chapter critically interprets the findings and ties them back to |

| | |
|---|---|
| | both the literature and the research questions/ hypotheses.<br>A mere description of the findings is a fail for a PG dissertation<br>This chapter needs to have both conceptual (academic) and applied elements. If it is overly applied and lacks links to underpinning theory = mark down; if it lacks application and is only theoretical = mark down. The literature and theory used in this section should reflect the literature review rather than introduce entirely new areas, unless there were unexpected findings.<br>The analysis and discussion of findings are normally separated into two chapters but can be combined into one chapter, especially for qualitative work. |
| **Recommendations and Conclusions** | The order of these two elements can vary, sometimes people prefer recommendations followed by conclusions; other people prefer them the other way around. It is not important which order is chosen.<br>In this final chapter, the following elements should be included, order may vary:<br>- Recommendations for managerial practice<br>- Contributions to theory<br>- Limitations of the study leading to areas of further research<br>- Conclusions<br><br>This chapter needs to show clearly if and how the research objectives have been achieved and what the contribution is. |

## 6 USE OF ABSTRACTS

Your dissertation should include an **abstract**, summarising the contents of the dissertation; this should include, for example, the issues you discuss or the data analysed, the main structure of your argument or the hypothesis tested, and the conclusions reached. It can be summarised as follows:

- The research question
- A brief explanation of why the question is interesting
- An outline of the materials and methods (perhaps the key theories or experiments used)
- A summary of the findings
- The most interesting of the implications

**Writing abstracts**

Writing an abstract involves boiling down the essence of a whole document into a short piece of writing that conveys the core information. One way of writing an effective abstract is to read your complete dissertation / project and do the following:

1. Highlight the main objective and the conclusions (check your introduction, discussion and perhaps conclusion)
2. Bracket information in the methods section that contains keyword information
3. Highlight the results from the discussion or results section.
4. Compile the above highlighted and bracketed information into a single paragraph
5. Condense the bracketed information into key words and phrases that identify your methods (you do not need to explain them in an abstract)
6. Delete extra words and phrases.
7. Delete any background information.
8. Rephrase the first sentence so that it begins by identifying what is new or particular about your dissertation rather than the general topic. One way of doing this is to begin the first sentence with the phrase "this dissertation" or "this study."
9. Revise the abstract so that it conveys the essential information.

**Appendices**

When to use them

- Material that is related but supplementary to the main argument
- Brief material referred to throughout your dissertation, such as a piece of legislation or historical document
- Complex tables or data

Avoid using appendices just to avoid making hard editing decisions about material you cannot include in the final text – exceeding the word limit will usually be

penalised and tutors will often not read beyond this.

Examples of appendix materials

- transcription(s) of interviews(s)
- examples and/or full results of questionnaires
- materials not published in standard sources such as correspondence between you and an author whose writing you are researching
- large tables of data

**Issues to note in using appendices**

Your main text of should flow to present a continuously advancing argument, informed by the results of applying particular analytical research methods (for example, textual or statistical). Whilst you should justify in the text which research method you have used and why, the full results of your application of it (for example a statistical printout) could be placed in an appendix. Appendices are not usually included in the word count, but do check this, especially for PhD submissions.

If you are in any doubt check with your department and/or supervisor. You must state in the main text or a footnote that particular material is in a specific appendix.

Adopt a system of either numbering or lettering appendices and keep to the system. For example, the first appendix referred to in the main text could be 'A' or '1', the second 'B' or '2', etc. Similarly, if you give one appendix a title, name any others. A list of appendices should appear after the Contents page.

## 7 THE ROLE OF THE ACADEMIC SUPERVISOR

**Your supervisor**
To help you with your research Dissertation, a member of the academic staff will be allocated to you as a supervisor. Your programme director will read your research proposal and will select an appropriate member of staff to act as your supervisor.

**Responsibilities of the supervisor**
The Dissertation supervisors will be responsible for:

a) encouraging the candidate to explore a range of possible research topics within the area chosen for study and indicated in the proposed title;
b) ensuring that dissertation proposals are feasible in terms of the timescale and resources available;
c) providing appropriate advice and guidance in relation to the candidate's initial dissertation proposal
d) ensuring that the student is provided with advice and guidance with the aim of facilitating the production of a dissertation of the requisite standard for a Taught Master's Degree by:

- providing support with the selection of a definitive research topic;
- assisting in the clarification of aims and objectives;
- recommending appropriate research sources and methods;
- providing guidance with the structuring and presentation of the dissertation;
- generally supporting, encouraging and motivating the student's research.

e) ensuring that appropriate ethical approval is obtained at every stage of preparing the dissertation;
f) ensuring that the student's initial dissertation proposal is refined as necessary in consultation with the candidate;
g) agreeing a timetable with the student for the submission of work and the scheduling of regular meetings
h) keeping a careful record of all such formal meetings, including dates, action agreed and deadlines set;
i) recording a summary of the outcomes of each meeting on the Postgraduate Taught Dissertation Supervision Record Form (Appendix GA19), and ensuring that the form is signed by both the supervisor and the student;
j) ensuring that work is returned according to specified deadlines and accompanied by constructive comment;
k) ensuring that dissertations are not accepted for assessment unless they have undergone a process of tutorial supervision.

**Responsibilities of the Student**
The Dissertation student will be responsible for:

a) ensuring that the dissertation produced is first and foremost his/her own work, albeit achieved with benefit of advice and guidance from the supervisor;
b) agreeing a timetable with the supervisor for the submission of work and the scheduling of regular meetings;
c) keeping a careful record of all such formal meetings, including dates, action agreed and deadlines set;
d) ensuring that a summary of the outcomes of each meeting is recorded on the

Postgraduate Taught Dissertation Supervision Record Form (Appendix GA19), and signed by both the supervisor and the student;

e) making a considered case to the supervisor if requesting additional meetings;

f) ensuring that their work is appropriately edited, particularly with reference to accuracy of grammar and spelling;

g) ensuring that any relevant material resulting from his/her research, such as transcripts, are included in the dissertation or are presented as appendices;

h) completing the work within the agreed framework, with any problems relating to late or unsatisfactory submission being brought to the supervisor's attention in writing as soon as possible.

**Getting the most out of your supervisor**

You can make best use of your supervisor's time by paying attention to the following points:

a) Prepare for your discussions. Just like any other meeting, a meeting with your supervisor requires preparation. He or she will have points to raise with you; make sure you have in turn thought through the points you want to raise with him or her.

b) Send written material in advance. Do not expect the supervisor to read your drafts at the meeting. If he or she is not ready, rearrange the meeting to give him/her more time to read the drafts. This is particularly important if the context of the discussion is a videoconference link or an extended telephone discussion.

c). Do your own proof reading. It is a total waste of a supervisor's time to proofread your work, and supervisors will refuse to do so.

d) Manage your Dissertation. Supervisors may be able to advise you on how to handle difficult situations which you encounter, but good project management dramatically reduces the number of these.

e) As the meetings are infrequent, it is important to keep your supervisor informed of progress on your Dissertation and any changes that you may make to the agreed subject matter. Whilst the Dissertation is primarily dependent on your individual effort that does not mean that you have no resources other than yourself. Gathering data, for example, may involve the assistance of others, including internal staff and external specialists. Please acknowledge any such assistance in the Dissertation.

## 8 PLANNING AND MANAGING YOUR DISSERTATION

Your research Dissertation is like any task or project you might undertake at work –it must be planned and managed. Good planning and management cannot guarantee a good Dissertation, but poor planning and management will make a good Dissertation very hard to achieve.

The key stages of planning and managing a research Dissertation are as follows:

1. **Defining your aims.**

   From the very beginning you need to have a clear idea of what you are trying to achieve. If you neglect this phase, you may find some truth in the saying 'if you don't know where you're going, you will end up somewhere else' (!). At the end of this stage, you should have a clear statement of your terms of reference.

2. **Working out what needs to be done.**

   Once you know what you are trying to achieve, you can work out what is involved in getting there. This will include what reading needs to be done, what contacts need to be made, what data must be collected, what analyses must be carried out and what writing up will be needed.

3. **Planning.**

   Once you know what needs to be done, you can draw up a plan for the completion of the Dissertation. Start with an audit of your skills, knowledge, contacts and interests. Your plan should include a detailed timetable for the Dissertation and a breakdown of tasks and dependencies within the detailed timetable.

4. **Carrying out the Dissertation.**

   Once you have developed your plan and got your supervisor's approval, you should be ready to go ahead with your research. Make sure to review your progress regularly against the plan. Remember that you will need plenty of time for reading around the topic and writing up the Dissertation. Also, note that you will have to make adjustments to accommodate unforeseen events (e.g. illness, computer problems, etc.). If you start drifting off-course, some tougher action may need to be taken.

Beware of some of the traps into which others before you have fallen:

1. Rushing into action without thinking what your Dissertation is really about and, therefore, ending up with bits and pieces of research all focused on different matters.

2. Failing to be clear with regard to the aims of the Dissertation and thus ultimately undertaking, say, three different Dissertations.

3. Underestimating the time needed for writing up; the Dissertation is the longest and most demanding individual piece of work during the Master's degree, and you should make sure you allocate plenty of time for the writing-up period.

4. Failing to build in any contingency for events such as unexpected travel, illness, delays in computing or printing, or unavailability of key informants, including supervisors.

5. Forgetting that many supervisors have significant teaching commitments or will be away, on research trips, conferences or possibly on holiday, over the summer.

6. Not bothering to get in contact with your supervisor. He/she is a highly trained individual, why are you not checking what you are doing with them?

In addition, according to internal and external examiners, there are some common pitfalls:

1. Lack of Self-Motivation and Passion: If you are bored with the Dissertation it is often reflected in the final submission. Your supervisor offers guidance, but bear in mind that that you need to take control of overall exercise. Investigating a topic of genuine interest to you is not required, though it can help to sustain your interest.

2. Overly Descriptive Account: Weak Dissertations are often marked by describing a single firm or situation in the absence of reference to relevant management literature or analysis of the situation.

3. Denied Access: If access to specific firms or individuals is essential to your Dissertation, you want to ensure access availability as part of the proposal. If access is not available to your original list of firms/individuals, is an alternative list available? Can the Dissertation be re-worked?

4. Poor Time Management: The Dissertation should be tackled in stages. For example, a review of the relevant literature – at the outset of the Dissertation process –will help you refine the research focus. Data analysis can only take place after you have finished data collection. This means that you cannot start and complete the Dissertation in a period of two or three weeks. You are encouraged to write on a regular basis, so that the Dissertation becomes part of your schedule. This means that the Dissertation assumes priority status alongside any other commitments.

5. Careless Copyediting and Proofreading: Do not rely on automatic checks for spelling and grammar.

## 9 THE DISSERTATION MODULE

**BMMB7003: Dissertation**

**LEVEL: 7**
**CREDITS: 60**

**JACS CODE: X210**

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**AIM(S)**

- To develop in the student an understanding of the application of research methodologies, and an ability to frame a research proposal.
- To develop in the student the ability to report research results in written format to an academic and/or professional audience, and to further develop the student's capacity for critical analysis and independent thought.

It is a prerequisite of this module that students attend a series of Research Methodology workshops and as a result have produced a successful research proposal for a dissertation. The workshops are intended to prepare students for the requirements of independent research and to enhance their professional competencies necessary for this purpose. This will ensure that students will:

- have developed a clear focus for their research, inquiry or investigation;
- have identified the context, boundaries and stakeholder interests;
- have considered research perspectives and ethical concerns and procedures;
- have considered research perspectives and ethical concerns and procedures; are informed about data collection and analysis and are in a position to successfully complete their research project.

All MBA Pathway students must write their Research Proposal and Dissertation that relates to the pathway specialism, e.g. (MBA Marketing Management) must choose a Marketing Management theme. Students will be given guidance in the Research Methods workshops and, following the Research Proposal submission, on the parameters of the specialist themes.

Once the Research Proposal has been successfully completed, the dissertation module provides the student with the necessary support and opportunity to produce a substantial specialist body of research (15,000 words) which has been instigated, developed and produced as a consequence of their own research initiative.

Only on the successful completion of Part 1 and the research proposal, will the student be formally invited to submit a dissertation.

## LEARNING OUTCOMES

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

- Prepare a research/independent study proposal that provides evidence that the topic to be studied is worth addressing; that the way the proposal addresses the topic is both appropriate and feasible in terms of intended activities, outcomes and resources and thus establishes its importance to both academic and professional communities.
- Plan, manage and execute an in depth research, inquiry or investigation with a business and/or management focus by applying the principles of research design to the formulation of a research question including, where appropriate, formal hypotheses that can be tested and the selection of appropriate research methods for answering these questions.
- Critically evaluate the appropriateness of qualitative/quantitative methods of data collection, in combination as necessary, to analyse, synthesise, interpret and present the resulting data and the applications of those methods by other researchers in other contexts.
- Demonstrate the ability to conduct research under supervision in a business and management context including the ability to review published literature critically, show conceptual and theoretical understanding, identify research problems, use project management skills to budget, manage time and other resources, handle data, interpret results and disseminate findings in a way that is consistent with professional business and management practice and normal principles of research ethics.
- Exhibit the analytical, numerical, literacy, communication and computer skills to enable critical research to be undertaken and be able to apply those transferable skills to develop research based inquiry in future employment settings.

## INDICATIVE CONTENT

- The complexities and practical issues of business and management research: Independent learning and development; stakeholder interests and ethical considerations; the investigative process; philosophical considerations; the use of theory; the importance of on-going clear communication.
- The importance of clear aims and objectives: project management, use of project management skills to budget, manage time and other resources, building and managing relationships; learning and reflection, reviewing and judging.
- Exploring the literature, writing a literature review, reviewing published literature critically, showing conceptual and theoretical understanding, identifying research problems and questions.
- Choosing a research method, data collection and sampling, data analysis and interpreting results, reliability and validity of data, evidence based approach; disseminating findings in a way that is consistent with professional business and management practice. Drawing valid conclusions and recommendations. Reflecting on the research process and outcomes and the learning experience.

## LEARNING AND TEACHING STRATEGY

The indicative content and requirements of the dissertation will be introduced at the end of Part 1 by an intensive research methodology workshop “Developing research competence and the research proposal” which is designed to bridge and enhance research knowledge and competencies. At the beginning of the workshop a dissertation handbook is provided for each student. At the end of stage 1, students will be expected to produce and present an

initial 2000 word research proposal prior to the commencement of the dissertation research at stage 2.
In stage 2, students will be expected to manage their own learning and implement their own research programme of study over the dissertation period. Students will be allocated a supervisor/ tutor who will meet with each student on a regular tutorial basis in order to monitor research progress (this will be for a minimum 15 hours tutorial time).
Guidelines and progress deadlines will be given to students at appropriate times of the year in order to facilitate continued progress. (All procedures and processes are contained in the dissertation handbook).

**CLASS CONTACT**

Stage 1: Developing research competence and the research proposal: Nominal 20 hours
Stage 2: The Dissertation: Nominal 15 hours contact time:
The study time for the module is divided as follows:

| **Activity type** | **Hours** | **Percentage** |
|---|---|---|
| Scheduled learning | 30 | 5% |
| Independent learning | 570 | 95% |
| Placement learning | | |
| **TOTAL** | **600** | **100%** |

**ASSESSMENT**

**Assessment Component 1**
***(Tick one)***
☐ **Written exam** ☒ **Coursework** ☐ **Practical**

| **Mode of assessment** | **Volume** | **Weighting** |
|---|---|---|
| Research proposal | 2000 words | |

**Assessment Component 2**
***(Tick one***
☐ **Written exam** ☒ **Coursework** ☐ **Practical**

| **Mode of assessment** | **Volume** | **Weighting** |
|---|---|---|
| Thesis | 15000 words | |

**Assessment Summary**

| **Activity type** | **Percentage** |
|---|---|
| Written exam | |
| Coursework | 100% |
| Practical | |
| **TOTAL** | **100%** |

**READING LIST**

| Module Code | BMMB7003 | |
|---|---|---|
| **Module Title** | **Dissertation** | |
| **Classification** | **Reading List entry** | **Electronic*** |
| Essential | Cottrel, S. (2014) *Dissertation and Project Reports – A step by step guide*. Basingstoke: Palgrave | ☐ |
| Essential | Marshall, C. (2015) *Designing Qualitative Research*. 6th Ed. London: Sage | ☐ |
| Essential | Veal, A.J. (2011) *Research Methods for Leisure and Tourism*. 4th Ed. Harlow: Prentice Hall | ☐ |
| Further | Alvesson, M. & Skoldberg, K. (2009) *Reflexive methodology: new vistas for qualitative research* 2nd Ed. Los Angeles; London: Sage Publications. | ☐ |
| Further | Anderson, T. and Kanuka, H. (2006) *E-research methods, Strategies and Issues*, London: Allyn and Bacon | ☐ |
| Further | Bell, J. (2005) *Doing your research projects*. 4th Ed. Maidenhead: Open University Press | ☐ |
| Further | Brown, R.B. (2006) *Doing your dissertation in business and management: the reality of researching and writing*. London: Sage Publications. | ☐ |
| Further | Bryman, A. and Bell, E. (2007) *Business research methods*, 2nd Ed., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007. | ☐ |
| Further | Cameron, S. and Price, D. (2009) *Business research methods: a practical approach* London: Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development. | ☐ |
| Further | Clegg, F. (1990) *Simple Statistics,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press | ☐ |
| Further | Cooper, D.R. and Schindler, P (2008) *Business research methods*, 10th Ed., London: McGraw-Hill. | ☐ |
| Further | Creswell, J.W. (2009) *Research design: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches*, London: Sage Publications. | ☐ |
| Further | Davies, M. (2007) *Doing a successful Research Project*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan | ☐ |
| Further | Davies, M.B. (2007) *Doing a successful research project: using qualitative or quantitative methods* Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan. | ☐ |
| Further | Denscombe, M. (2007) *The Good Research Guide for small scale social research projects,* 3rd Ed*., Maidenhead*, Open University Press | ☐ |
| Further | Denscombe, M. (2010) *Ground Rules for Social Research*, Maidenhead, Open University Press | ☐ |
| Further | Dul, J and Hak, T (2008) *Case study methodology in business research*, London: Butterworth-Heinemann/Elsevier | ☐ |
| Further | Finn, M. Et al (2000) *Tourism and Leisure Research Methods*, Harlow: Longman | ☐ |
| Further | Fisher, C.M. & Buglear, J. (2010) *Researching and writing a dissertation: an essential guide for business students* 3rd ed., Harlow: Financial Times/Prentice Hall. | ☐ |
| Further | Grix, J. (2004) *The Foundations of Research* (Palgrave Study Guides), Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan | ☐ |
| Further | Hart C (2004) *Doing Your Masters Dissertation (Essential Study Skills series*), London: Sage Publications | ☐ |
| Further | James, N. & Busher, H. (2009) *Online Interviewing*, London: Sage | ☐ |

| Module Code | BMMB7003 | |
|---|---|---|
| Module Title | Dissertation | |
| Classification | Reading List entry | Electronic* |
| | Publications. | |
| Further | Krippendorff, K. (2004) *Content Analysis*, Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage. | ☐ |
| Further | Maylor, H. and Blackmon, K. (2005) *Researching Business and Management*, Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan | ☐ |
| Further | Murray, N. & Hughes, G. (2008) *Writing up you university assignments and research projects: a practical handbook* Maidenhead, Berks: Open University Press | ☐ |
| Further | Natthews, B. & Ross, L. (2010) *Research methods: A practical guide for the social sciences*, London: Longmans. | ☐ |
| Further | Oakshott, L. (2006) *Essential Quantitative Methods for Business, Management and Finance*, Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan | ☐ |
| Further | Oppenheim, A.N. (2000) *Questionnaire Design and Attitude Measurement*, London: Continuum. | ☐ |
| Further | *Post Graduate Students*, London: Palgrave, | ☐ |
| Further | Rowley, A. (2011) IBMSPSS Statistics (18 &19) Workbook, Manchester Metropolitan University, Manchester. | ☐ |
| Further | Rowntree, D. *Statistics (1991) Without Tears: An Introduction for Non-Mathematicians*, London: Penguin. | ☐ |
| Further | Ruderstam K and Newton R (2007) *Surviving Your Dissertation: A Comprehensive Guide to Content and Process*, London: Sage Publications | ☐ |
| Further | Sapsford, R. and Jupp, V. (2006) *Data Collection and Analysis*, London: Sage. | ☐ |
| Further | Stewart, D. W., Shamdasani, P.N. and Rook, D.W. (2007) *Focus groups: theory and practice* 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks; London: Sage Publications. | ☐ |
| Further | Veal, A. J. (2005). *Business research methods : a managerial approach*. 2nd Ed., Frenchs Forest, N.S.W.: Pearson/Addison Wesley. | ☐ |
| Further | White B, (2004) *Writing Your MBA Dissertation*, London: Thomson Learning | ☐ |
| Websites | Practical Assessment, research and Evaluation (online) Available from: http://pareonline.net/Home.htm (Accessed: 26-08-2012) | ☒ |
| Websites | Social Research Update (online) Available from: http://sru.soc.surrey.ac.uk/ (Accessed: 26-08-2012) | ☒ |
| Websites | Academic Journals (online) Available from: http://www.academicjournals.co.uk (Accessed: 26-08-2012) | ☒ |
| Websites | ReStore (online) Available from: http://www.aimexpertresearcher.org/ (Accessed: 26-08-2012) | ☒ |
| Websites | Audit Commission (online) Available from: http://www.audit-commission.gov.uk/Pages/default.aspx (Accessed: 26-08-2012) | ☒ |
| Websites | CIM (online) Available from: http://www.cim.org.uk (Accessed: 26-08-2012) | ☒ |
| Websites | CIMA, Chartered Institute of Management Accountants (online) Available from: http://www.cimaglobal.com (Accessed: 26 August 2012) | ☒ |

| Module Code | BMMB7003 | |
|---|---|---|
| Module Title | Dissertation | |
| Classification | Reading List entry | Electronic* |
| Websites | Copac Library (online) Available from: http://www.copac.ac.uk (Accessed: 26-08-2012) | ☒ |
| Websites | UK Data Archive (online) Available from: http://www.data-archive.ac.uk/ (Accessed: 26-08-2012) | ☒ |
| Websites | The Economist (online) Available from: http://www.economist.com/research/ (Accessed: 26-08-2012) | ☒ |
| Websites | The electronic Journal of Business research Methods (online) Available from: http://www.ejbrm.com/ (Accessed: 26-08-2012) | ☒ |
| Websites | Business Research checklists and guidelines (online) Available from: http://www.palgrave.com/business/collis/br/students/checklists.html (Accessed: 26-08-2012) | ☒ |
| Websites | Web Centre for Social Research Methods (online) Available from: http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/ (Accessed: 26-08-2012) | ☒ |

## 10 PRESENTATION AND STYLE OF THE DISSERTATION

### 1. Introduction

In presenting your dissertation there are some factors to consider:

***Structure of the Work***
***Referencing Conventions***
***Word Limit***
***Format***
***Grammatical convention/style***

### 2. Structure of the Work

Your dissertation should be a logical expression of your thinking on a particular topic of research. Having carefully considered the topic over a number of months, take time to plan the structure of your dissertation documentation. Ask yourself what is required, in what order the points are most effectively made, and what conclusions could appropriately be drawn. A suggested structure is given in the section above.

### 3. Referencing Conventions

A student guide to the Harvard referencing system can be found in the Faculty of Business and Management Handbook of Reference Guidance which can be seen on Moodle.

### 4. Word Limit

The Dissertation module has a word limit of 15,000 words in total and it is important that you adhere to this. (The preliminary pages, bibliography/reference list and any other relevant material included in appendices are not subject to the word limit.) No-one is likely to mark you down for delivering a total of 15,500 words when you were

asked for a maximum of 15,000, but excessively long pieces of work could lose marks. By contrast, "undershooting" the word limit also jeopardises your chances of passing or getting a good mark. **It is important to remember that the word limit is part of the task.** Condensing a lot of information/ ideas into a well-structured answer within the word limit is a real skill. It shows you have the ability to sift information, construct an argument, and express yourself succinctly. If you have difficulty "pruning" material to fit a word limit, look for verbosity. Economy of words and clarity of expression are important. Sometimes, it may be useful to create footnotes/endnotes or appendices so that you can refer to information without losing the thrust of your argument.

The word limit is set for the following reasons.

**(a)** The discipline to write at this length is considerable. It is a substantial piece of academic work yet it requires good editorial skills to avoid excessive length.

**(b)** It encourages incisiveness and a good grasp of theoretical/conceptual issues to bring them into sharp focus.

**(c)** It necessitates a tight definition of the topic.

**(d)** It necessitates a meaningful analysis of the relevant literature not a mere listing of sources with brief comments.

**(e)** It necessitates communication of complex ideas in clear and precise fashion.

## 11 DISSERTATION ASSESSMENT

Your dissertation will be assessed using the following marking sheet.

| **BMMB7003 Level 7 Dissertation<br>2018 - 2019<br>DISSERTATION ASSESSMENT** |
|---|

| | |
|---|---|
| **Name of Student:** | |
| **Title of Dissertation:** | |
| **Date:** | |
| **First Examiner:** | |
| **Second Examiner:** | |

| **Guideline Criteria for Assessment** | **Possible %** | **Agreed** |
|---|---|---|
| **i) Introduction** | 15 | |
| **ii) Literature review** | 20 | |
| **iii) Research Methodology** | 20 | |
| **iv) Analysis of results** | 20 | |
| **v) Conclusions /recommendations** | 15 | |
| vi) **Presentation** | 10 | |
| | 100% | |

| | |
|---|---|
| (i) INTRODUCTION/ RATIONALE (15%)<br><br>*Marks will be awarded for:*<br><br>*Over all coherence/justification*<br>*Rationale for study*<br>*Clear research question/hypothesis*<br>*Clear aims and objectives*<br>*Background to subject area* | **COMMENTS:**<br><br>**1st Marker:**<br><br>**2nd Marker:**<br><br>**Grade:** |

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| ii) LITERATURE REVIEW (20%)<br>*Marks will be awarded for:*<br>*Range of literature & appropriate use and review of literature*<br>*Evaluation and review of both theoretical and secondary research data*<br>*Thorough knowledge and comprehension of topic*<br>*Understanding of relevant concepts and theories*<br>*Discussion of conceptual and theoretical issues*<br>*Summary and clear understanding of principal issues relevant to topic* | **COMMENTS:**<br><br>**1st Marker:**<br><br>**2nd Marker:**<br><br>**Grade:** |

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|---|---|
| **iii) RESEARCH METHODS (20%)**<br><br>Marks will be awarded for:<br><br>Selection of clear research question or testable hypotheses (where applicable)<br>Selection of clear aims and objectives<br>Selection of appropriate research methodology<br>Theoretical and applied research methods knowledge<br>Effective survey techniques<br>Effective Sample framework<br>Critical evaluation of such methodology<br>Clear understanding of research limitations | **COMMENTS:**<br><br>**1st Marker:**<br><br>**2nd Marker:**<br><br>**Grade:** |
| iv) ANALYSIS OF RESULTS (20%)<br>Marks will be awarded for:<br>Clear presentation of results<br>Appropriate analytical interpretation of results<br>Application of results to research objectives, hypotheses research question and literature<br>Appropriate use of statistical | **COMMENTS:**<br><br>**1st Marker:**<br><br>**2nd Marker:** |

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| methods and or qualitative data (where applicable)<br>Appropriate synthesis and evaluation of research results, inferences and implicatio | **Grade:** |
| v) CONCLUSIONS / RECOMMENDATIONS (15%)<br><br>Marks will be awarded for:<br><br>Logical and clearly structured conclusions<br>Appropriate synthesis between research and literature<br>*Effective completion of aims and objectives set*<br>*Evaluation of main concepts and issues*<br>Potential applications of findings to future management/policy or research issues | **COMMENTS:**<br><br>**1st Marker:**<br><br>**2nd Marker:**<br><br>**Grade:** |

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|---|---|
| vi) PRESENTATION (10%)<br>Marks will be awarded for:<br>Grammar, syntax,<br>Structure & layout<br>referencing systems<br>visual material (where applicable) | **COMMENTS:**<br><br>**1st Marker:**<br><br>**2nd Marker:**<br><br>**Grade:** |

**OVERALL COMMENTS:**

**1st Marker:**

**2nd Marker:**

**1st MARKER SIGNATURE:** **DATE**:

**2nd MARKER SIGNATURE:** **DATE**:

## 12 ASSESSMENT OF RESEARCH PROPOSAL

The research proposal does not carry any credits (but must be uploaded to Turnitin) and thus is not awarded a mark. It is graded at pass/fail using the following form.

Your proposal must achieve the required standard before you are able to continue with your dissertation. Failure to submit a proposal of the required standard may result in withdrawal from the programme.

**PROPOSAL MARKING SCHEDULE**
**Name**_____

| **UWTSD MBA**<br>**BMMB7003 Level 7 Dissertation**<br>**Research Proposal Marking Scheme** | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Assessment Criteria** | **Indicative content** | **Completed** | **Grade Awarded P or F** |
| **Provides a persuasive and convincing research rationale and aims and objectives and, identifies the context, boundaries and ethical and resource considerations of the research.** | **1. Academic Focus and Research Rationale**<br>a. State you chosen topic of research<br>b. Define the context, boundaries and ethical considerations of your topic<br>c. Provide a justification for your topic choice based on a review of previous research in the topic area.<br>d. Define the concepts and theory(theories) that will inform your research<br>e. State the primary research question<br>f. State the aims and objectives of the research. | <br>√<br>√<br><br>√<br>√<br>√<br>√ | |
| **Identifies the research paradigm and evaluates and justifies the choice of research methods.** | **2. Research Paradigm and Method**<br>a. Identify the research paradigm you will use to research the topic<br>b. Identify the research methods that you will use to gather the data<br>c. Critically evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of the chosen research methods<br>d. Summarise the methodological limitations of the research | <br>√<br>√<br>√<br><br>√ | |
| **Understands the employment of data collection methods and can justify their use** | **3. Data Collection**<br>a. Select the appropriate data collection techniques for your topic<br>b. Identify the respondent population and sample if required<br>c. Explain how you will analyse the data collected<br>d. Specify the research limitations in terms of both reliability and validity | <br>√<br>√<br>√<br>√ | |
| **Evaluates the methods of analysis of data and how the data will be presented** | 4. **Methods of Data Analysis**<br>a. Qualitative analysis and/or<br>b. Quantitative analysis | <br>√ | |
| **Identifies how the research is to be managed in terms of budget, time management and other** | **5. Resource and Time Management**<br>a. Evaluate the resources needed<br>b. Produce a time plan for the research<br>c. Budget considerations | <br>√<br>√<br>√ | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **resources.** | | | |
| **TOTAL** | | | |

Assessments will be graded PASS or FAIL.
**Signature of Lecturer** …….. **Date** ……..

Please note the following when completing the proposal:

1. Writing: Written in English in an appropriate business/academic style
2. Focus: Focus only on the items specified to be included in the portfolio.
3. Length: 2000 words (maximum)
4. Formatting: Typed on A4 paper in Times New Roman or Arial (or similar) font, font size 12 with at least 2 centimetre space at each edge, double spaced and pages numbered.
5. Document format: In business report format, with a clear title, course, and name or ID number on a cover sheet and including a bibliography using Harvard referencing throughout.
6. Indicative Bibliography: Research should use reliable and relevant sources of information e.g. academic books and journals that have been peer reviewed. The research should be extensive.

## 13 NOTICE OF CANDIDATURE FORM

The following form needs to be completed and submitted with your dissertation. A copy is available on the Moodle page for the dissertation module

**EXAMINATION OF TAUGHT MASTER'S DEGREE DISSERTATION:**

**NOTICE OF CANDIDATURE FORM**

Please complete this form when your dissertation is ready to be submitted for examination.

Surname/Family Name..... Date of Birth.....

Forenames (in full).....Title.....

Institution Number (if known).....

Title of Degree (eg MA, MSc, MBA etc).....

Title of Taught Master's degree scheme followed (eg Equine Studies) .....

.....

Department/School in which study pursued .....

Name of your Supervisor.....

Full Title of dissertation submitted .....

.....

.....

Please indicate that the following will all be submitted along with this form:

☐ two permanently bound copies of your dissertation plus 1 electronic copy submitted via Turnitin;

**SUBMISISION OF DISSERTATIONS**

| | **Final Dissertation submission** |
|---|---|
| | Dissertations to be submitted via Turnitin, together with<br>2 paper copies (Heat bound).<br>Paper copies to be forwarded to :<br><br>HKMA UWTSD MBA Secretariat<br>Ms Lottie Fung |

| | |
|---|---|
| | Towngas Management Development Centre<br>16/F, Tower B, Southmark,<br>11Yip Hing Street, Wong Chuk Hang,<br>Hong Kong |

**Declaration/Statements page**

DECLARATION

This work has not previously been accepted in substance for any degree and is not being concurrently submitted in candidature for any degree.

Signed ..... (candidate)

Date .....

STATEMENT 1

This work is the result of my own investigations, except where otherwise stated.

Other sources are acknowledged by footnotes giving explicit references. A bibliography is appended.

Signed ..... (candidate)

Date .....

STATEMENT 2

I hereby give consent for my work, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loan, and for the title and summary to be made available to outside organisations.

Signed ..... (candidate)

Date .....

**NB:** *Candidates on whose behalf a bar on access has been approved by the University (see Note 1), should use the following version of Statement 2:*

I hereby give consent for my work, if accepted, to be available for photocopying and for inter-library loans **after expiry of a bar on access approved by the University.**

Signed ..... (candidate)

Date .....

Candidate's signature .....

Date .....

**NOTES**

**1 Provisions for Bars on Access to Higher Degree Dissertations**

The University expects that research work accepted for a higher degree shall be openly available, and subject to no security classification or restriction of access. (Please note, however, that the University requires the reader of a dissertation to sign a declaration that in any statement or written work being prepared on the subject (or cognate subject) of the dissertation, due acknowledgement to the author will be made for any helpful information obtained from the dissertation.)

Nevertheless, in cases where there is an overriding need for a restriction of copying or access (for example where sponsored research has resulted in a dissertation which contains commercially-sensitive information) the University may place a bar on photocopying of and/or access to a dissertation for a specified period (normally three years in the first instance). It is the responsibility of your supervisor to make an application to the University for a bar to be sought as soon as is reasonably practicable, ideally at the outset of your candidature.

Please note that, in the event that a bar on photocopying and/or access is granted by the University, the signed statement to be included with each copy of the dissertation submitted should indicate that the dissertation may be made openly available *after the expiry of the bar on access*.

Normally, the title and summary of the dissertation will be made available.

## 2 Taught Master's Dissertation Archive

The University will keep a record of all dissertations successfully submitted for Part II of a taught Master's Degree. The record will include the student code, student name, the dissertation title and the mark awarded. The record will also include the title of the degree awarded and the year in which the award was conferred.

The University will keep one copy of each dissertation successfully submitted for Part II of a Taught Master's Degree. Following the successful outcome of the relevant
Progression/Award Examining Board, a printed copy of the dissertation will be sent to Library and Learning Resources for cataloguing and storage within the Library.
Dissertations will subsequently be available for reference use only.

An electronic copy of any dissertation deposited in the National Library of Wales will also be deposited in the University's digital repository.

## 3 National Library of Wales

In the event of the dissertation meeting the criteria for being deposited in the National Library of Wales, the candidate will be required to provide an additional copy in permanent, hardback binding.

Dissertations are only deposited in the National Library of Wales if:

(a) deemed by the examiners to be of Distinction standard
*or*
(b) if they are in the fields of Celtic Studies, Welsh or Welsh History;
*or*
(c) if they do not meet either of the above criteria, but are considered by the examiners to be of particular relevance to Wales.

## 14 STUDENT SUPPORT

If you are struggling with your work it is understandable and you must share your problem. Rather than just thinking about it, please make an appointment and speak to your supervisor. If your problem is more personal in nature, you may prefer to speak to a different member of staff from HKMA local secretariat.

## 15 LIBRARY DATA SOURCES

### Online Library

The library aims to provide as many resources as possible electronically. The library subscribes to a wide variety of e-resources, including e-books and e-journals, all of which are available via the library website and are searchable via the library catalogue. E-resources can be accessed from anywhere using your university login: http://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/online-library/.

## 16 UNFAIR PRACTICE AND PLAGIARISM

The University defines unfair practice as 'any act, intentional or otherwise, whereby a person may obtain for himself/herself or for another, an unpermitted advantage…'. Committing unfair practice in assessment is one of the most serious offences in academic life, and its consequences can be severe. It undermines the integrity of scholarship, research, and of the examination and assessment process.

Plagiarism is one type of unfair practice. Plagiarism is passing off, or attempting to pass off, another's work as your own. It includes copying the words, ideas, images or research results of another without acknowledgement, whether those words etc. are published or unpublished. It is plagiarism, for example, to copy the work of another student, of a member of staff or a published article without crediting the author. Persons who allow their work to be plagiarised are also guilty. Plagiarism is also submitting work for an assignment that has been submitted for another assignment before without acknowledging that this is the case – this is self-plagiarism.

The guidance that follows explains what is meant by plagiarism, describes the University's regulations for dealing with it, and provides help in avoiding it. All students are asked to submit an electronic copy of their work wherever possible. This is so that the work can be checked against the database of the UK Higher Education Plagiarism Detection Service, Turnitin. Your tutors have the right to do so since, in University Regulations registering as a student at the University you have consented to the submission of your work, if necessary, to Turnitin.

### How can I avoid plagiarism?

Coursework, dissertations, or creative work are meant to be your own original work. Obviously you will use the work of others. Not only is this inevitable, it is expected. All scholarship builds on the work of others. The important thing to remember is always to acknowledge your sources. All Schools will provide sessions on referencing and plagiarism but as a general rule of thumb observe the following guidelines:

- Anything that is copied or quoted from another source, including electronic sources such as the internet, must be in quotation marks and attributed to the original author. This may be in the body of the text or as a footnote. Full details of a source may be contained in a bibliography. Whatever method is used,

always acknowledge your source and give full details of it (i.e. title, author, and page number).

• Synthesising the work of others involves putting their ideas into your words. This is fine but you must acknowledge your source. This can be done in a number of ways depending on the context. For example: 'Hart maintains that...' 'Hart provides evidence for..': 'It is argued, or submitted by Hart that...' Then give the source of the original work.

• Where you are generally indebted for your ideas to one or two main sources, this can be a bit trickier. If the ideas or the way they are presented come from one or two sources, make this clear. Do the same if they come from lectures. It is important not to claim originality where it does not exist but to indicate in general where the information comes from.

The golden rule is; 'if in doubt, provide references'. Consult your tutors if you have any problems, in particular with the method of citing books and articles, which may differ from subject to subject. There are no penalties for asking for advice and guidance; there are severe penalties for plagiarism!

**What are the penalties?**

Plagiarism by students in coursework, other forms of continuous assessment, examinations, dissertations or theses will be dealt with according to the Unfair Practice Procedure and regulations. The same regulations apply to any other form of unfair practice. These regulations can be found in Chapter 7 of the AQH at http://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/academic-office/

The University applies a range of penalties, varying in severity, where unfair practice is confirmed. All tutors are required to be vigilant in the detection of plagiarism and are required to take action in all cases where it is suspected.

With every piece of coursework you present for assessment, you will be required to fill in a pro-forma stipulating that the work is your own original work. Your work may not be University Regulations marked if you do not include a plagiarism statement with your assessment. It is your responsibility to make sure that the appropriate form is included with your work. Copies of the form are included in this handbook.

## 17 LIST OF REFERENCES

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