

MACAA - Guidelines for commencing your dissertation

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Enrolling for the Dissertation

Once you have finished your four taught modules, you become eligible to write your dissertation, on successful completion of which, your MA is awarded.

There are two processes to follow here.

First, as academic staff we will begin to work with you as soon as you have successfully finished your fourth module – unless you wish to take a break. This means working on ideas for your research and formulating a proposal, see the outline below for more information on this process.

Second, there is an administrative process within the University. The marks from your last module will be approved by the University at an Exam Board which will be held several months after your marks have been submitted. When the marks have been approved you will receive a communication from the University inviting you to enrol for the Dissertation module. Technically this is known as ‘progressing to Part 2’ (Part 1 consists of the four taught modules, and the Dissertation is Part 2). You then enrol on line and you will receive an invoice from finance in the normal way.

The Steps to begin your MA Dissertation

Once you have completed your fourth module and are waiting to be progressed into the dissertation by the university you can begin to pull your dissertation ideas together by using the **forum on the Dissertation Moodle page**. So the important steps are:

Step 1 – Post your dissertation thoughts and ideas on the Dissertation Forum. Here Dr. Garry Philipson will help you give an academic shape to your ideas. It is during this process that we begin to match you up with the right supervisor for your dissertation. The important point here is to make a start, you can change your topic as you develop your thinking on the Forum.

Step 2 – Once your thoughts are taking shape on the forum a supervisor (one of the MA tutors) will be allocated to work on a one-to-one basis with you to begin to give shape to your **Dissertation Proposal**.

Step 3 – You submit your completed proposal (once your supervisor has deemed it is ready) to the Dissertation Tutor, Dr. Frances Clynes, who will either accept the proposal or suggest changes. At this stage it may also become apparent that your supervisor may need to be changed; this is in order for you to be working with the tutor who is most familiar with your topic.

Step 3a – Ethics. If your research involves working with people then you will need to gain approval for your project from the Ethics Committee. Your supervisor will help you with completing your **Ethics form**. This completed form is then submitted to the Dissertation Tutor (Dr. Frances Clynes) who will either pass it on to the Ethics Committee or suggest further changes before it is submitted to the committee. Please note this process can take about a month.

Step 4 – You will then turn to the **Timetable form**. With your supervisor you will design your chapter outline and timetable for your dissertation and then submitting this form to the Dissertation Tutor for their records.

Thus you need to have your Dissertation Proposal accepted, you may need to get approval for Ethics, and you will need to submit your Chapter Outline and Timetable. These are the first steps that you need to undertake in order to engage in your dissertation. Of course while Steps 3 and 4 are happening you can be engaging in your literature reviews and background reading.

Dissertation Seminars

Once you are allocated a supervisor this tutor will be your first point of contact. They will give you feedback on your proposal and also, if required, your Ethic Approval form. However, independent of this support there are also Dissertation Seminars which are held about every six weeks.

These seminars contain discussions on general topics such as building a literature review, or the structure of a dissertation, or research related issues. Additionally, time to time for student to presentations on their own work.

The schedule for these seminars is generally posted on the Dissertation Moodle page at the beginning of every year.
