

Postgraduate Dissertation Procedure:

The postgraduate dissertation is the main opportunity for students to put the theory they have developed over the last semesters.

A Students Guide to Dissertation Presentation

There is no best way of writing a dissertation or one model for an appropriate format. However, certain aspects are conventionally found in a dissertation and should only be varied after discussion with the supervisor for a good reason. These are:

1) *An opening section* which should contain the following separate pages: Title page, declaration and statement, acknowledgements, abstract (a summary of fewer than 300 words, which should summarise all sections of the dissertation: THIS MUST BE INCLUDED), and table of contents.

(2) **Chapter One: Introduction** – *this chapter* should be an introduction to the dissertation which should state very clearly the purpose of the project on which the dissertation reports, the results, **a background to the study and any preliminary scene setting that may be necessary**. This chapter should include key sections such as research background, statement of the problem, purpose of the study, research aims and objectives, research questions and a brief outline of the subsequent chapters of the dissertation. (Note: it is usual, somewhat paradoxically, to write the introduction after most of the dissertation is complete in order that a student has a clear idea of what is being introduced).

3) **Chapter Two: Literature Review** – *this chapter* should be a review of the relevant academic literature on which the dissertation builds, in a critical way, the relevant theoretical ideas and concepts.

4) **Chapter Three: Research Methodology** – *A chapter on the methodology* used, **what** was used, **why**, what methodologies are considered, what was selected and why.

Justification for the final methodology selected and the sampling techniques, sampling framework, and the size and type of any appropriate survey should be included. (If a case study methodology is used, then the justification for the organisation used in the dissertation).

5) **Chapter Four: Data Analysis and Findings** – *this chapter reports on the research findings*, both secondary and primary, clearly described, using as themes, **what** you have discovered and proposing reasons **why** this may be. **This section should use any appropriate graphical representation that adds to the clarity of your findings.**

6) **Chapter Five: Conclusion** – *clear conclusion chapter* setting out the main findings of the dissertation linking your **literature reviews** with the **research findings** so that a clear thesis can be identified through the whole work. On this information, you can make your argument and assess the question you posed in your initial title. Remember to include what your findings contribute to both the general literature on the subject and the specialist field, and/or practical problems which you have covered empirically. Include those results which surprised you and which may appear, at first sight, counter-intuitive to others. Make sure that you address all the objectives of the study. Do not forget to identify further avenues of development.

7) **Chapter Six: Recommendations** – *Clear recommendations or procedures* that are to be recommended that come out of your dissertation and research.

8) **Bibliography**: There should be a complete *bibliography* of all works which are referenced in the dissertation whether as part of the literature review or as sources of information. This should be done in a standard Harvard format listing works alphabetically by author. It should be noted that one of the routine sources of presentational problems comes in mistakes in the bibliography and therefore students should take considerable care in the compilation of the bibliography and ensure that every work referred to in the texts is in fact listed in the bibliography. **The bibliography should be ordered in the form of Books, then Journals/Articles and finally any Web sites with their full URL address.**

9) *Appendices* to the dissertation are legitimate but should be kept to an absolute minimum.

It is important that the dissertation should be as much the student's own independent work as a formal examination script. A dissertation should not merely consist of a patchwork of other people's thoughts and interpretations stitched together with a few threads of the student's own devising. The **OVERALL LENGTH** of the dissertation (excluding appendices) must be 15,000 words (-/+ 10%), and in practice, the length of a dissertation would normally be expected to be within a range of 14,000 to 16,000 words.