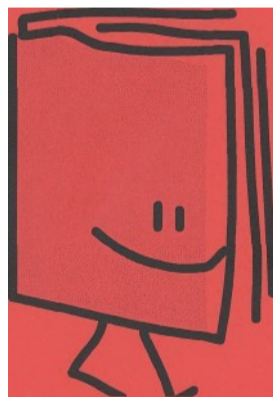


**The Business School  
Undergraduate Programmes**

# **Business School Dissertation Modules**

**Marketing (U5509x)  
Business Administration & Management (U5109x)  
Accounting & Finance (U5009x)  
Retail Management (U5609x)**

**This guide is appropriate for dissertations that are  
to be submitted in Semester 1 and Semester 2,  
2009/10**

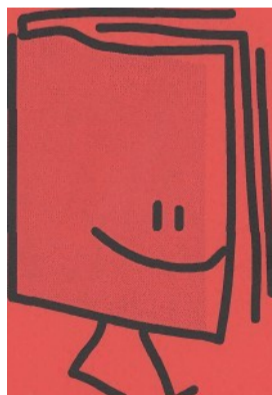


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**Welcome** to one of the most challenging and rewarding pieces of work that you can do as an undergraduate at Oxford Brookes - the dissertation! This guide is designed to give an introduction to your task and to set out the regulations that apply.

### **AN OVERVIEW OF DISSERTATIONS**

The bare essentials **PAGE 3**

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**FORWARD**

**Note!! Reference is made to the Business Dissertations Guide on Brookes Virtual throughout this guide. You may well already be registered for this site. If not please contact the Undergraduate office for registration and immediate access.**

## An overview of dissertations

### Why do it?

The dissertation is a double credit 'honours' module and is no longer compulsory - most students have a choice between honours alternatives. Please see your Field Guide or 'Stage 2 Choices Guide' for a full outline of your choices.

NB. U51072 Methods of Enquiry as a pre-requisite to the dissertation module.

The dissertation provides a valuable opportunity to develop your ability to set yourself objectives, manage your own learning, and produce a piece of work of which you can be proud. It also provides a great opportunity to pull together separate pieces of knowledge and insight you have gained from different taught modules, to help you gain an in-depth understanding of a particular topic. Many students find it one of the most demanding modules that they undertake but often the most worthwhile. The dissertation provides an opportunity to work one-to-one with a member of academic staff: your supervisor, on a topic that interests you. Choosing your own topic and managing your own learning can be daunting - but it does mean that you can ensure that your area of study is of interest to you and plays to your strengths

### What is it?

The University guidelines say:

"A dissertation is an extended study of a topic agreed as appropriate for a field. Nevertheless it should demonstrate the student's ability to argue coherently, to marshal evidence, to evaluate critically and synthesise the disparate sources used, and to identify and work with appropriate theoretical methods. It does not necessarily involve original research or the study of unpublished or primary material."

Other key characteristics:

- Usually undertaken with the help and advice of a supervisor
- Normally around 8,000 words, with an upper limit of 10,000 for a double credit dissertation module.

You are encouraged to calculate the time and effort spent on your dissertation modules on the same basis as all other modules; i.e. approximately 150 hours for a single module, and 300 hours for double modules.

### What is involved?

Key stages are:

Understanding what a dissertation is, how to do a |  
good one, and choosing your topic |

<j Preparing a proposal, and gaining your  
| supervisor(s) agreement to proceed, and  
registering for the correct module(s)

| Working on the dissertation itself with the  
| help of your supervisor(s)

| Printing, binding, handing-in the completed >;  
^dissertation (and celebrating its completion!)

**When does everything need to be done?**

**Key Dates for Dissertations registered for submission in Semester 2, 2009/2010  
(appropriate for students graduating in Summer 2010)**

<b>DISSERTATION PROPOSAL DUE IN</b>	<b>REGISTRATION DATE</b>	<b>DISSERTATION DUE IN</b>
<b>4.00 pm 20th April 2009</b> (Monday - Week 10, Semester 2)	<b>4.00 pm 25th September 2009</b> (Friday - Week 0, Semester 1)  This is a University Deadline - it is your responsibility to make sure you are registered for a dissertation module by this date. However, the Business School may use its discretion to accept forms up to the end of Week 1.	<b>4.00 pm 26th March 2010</b> (Friday - Week 8, Semester 2)  Late submission penalties are strictly applied - leave enough time for formatting and printing your dissertation - problems should be expected with a piece of work of this size
<b><i>Credit entry students only</i></b> <b>4.00 pm 23rd October 2009</b> (Friday - Week 4, Semester 1)	<b><i>Credit entry students only</i></b> <b>4.00 pm. 13th November 2009</b> (Friday - Week 7, Semester 1)	

**Key Dates for Dissertations registered for submission in Semester 1, 2009/2010  
(appropriate for students graduating in January 2010 - very few students will fall into this category)**

<b>4.00pm 24th November, 2008</b> (Monday - Week 10, Semester 1)	<b>4.00pm 30th January, 2009</b> (Friday - Week 0, Semester 2)  This is a University Deadline - it is your responsibility to make sure you are registered for a dissertation module by this date	<b>4.00 pm 20th November 2009</b> (Friday - Week 8, Semester 1)  Late submission penalties are strictly applied - leave enough time for formatting and printing your dissertation - problems should be expected with a piece of work of this size.
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## Any advice from past students?

Quotes from module evaluations:

"I would recommend students to:

- visit your supervisor early
- start it early
- keep in constant communication with your supervisor; they will be there for you if you can be bothered, don't leave it to the last minute to get it printed and bound."

"The dissertation has proven to be extremely hard work but the majority of times enlightening and interesting. The main problem lies with doing nothing like it here previously."

"I think the dissertation was particularly hard because of its nature - i.e. research not / project work. Education prior to this has been on a listen, learn and 'repeat' type **basis.**"

"Looking over good dissertations in the dissertation workshops was very useful, really helped me focus on what was expected."

## Recommended Core Text

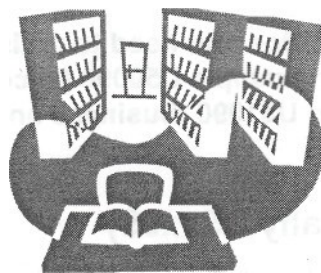
SAUNDERS, M, LEWIS, P and THORNHILL, A (2006) 4th Edition, Research Methods for Business Students. FT/Pitman (Earlier editions are also still very useful)

*A very clear guide to business research methods - well delivered and detailed. This text covers the entire dissertation process. It is written in a student friendly style and contains real-life case studies, worked examples and activities. This text is referred to throughout this guide.*

Please note: There are two types of academic literature that you will need to read for your dissertation. These relate to:

1. *How* you undertake your research (your research method) - see above
2. Your dissertation topic.

For a good dissertation you will need to be familiar with both types of academic literature.



## Choosing the right dissertation module

As well as choosing between honours modules you may also have a choice between dissertation modules. Acceptable dissertation module(s) for your field(s) are listed in the Undergraduate Modular Programme Handbook.

On a single field you have two options:

- Do an interdisciplinary dissertation.
- Do a double dissertation in one of your fields

### The modules covered by this guide

MODULE NUMBER AND TITLE	MODULE LEADER
U50090 Interdisciplinary Dissertation in Accounting and Finance	Mike Collins
U50099 Dissertation in Accounting and Finance	
U51090 Interdisciplinary Dissertation in Business & Management	Jack Colford
U51099 Business and Management Dissertation	
U55090 Interdisciplinary Dissertation in Marketing Management	Sue Pfunder
U55099 Dissertation in Marketing Management	
U56090 Interdisciplinary Dissertation in Retail Management	Sue Pfunder
U56099 Dissertation in Retail Management	

### Interdisciplinary dissertations (U5xx90)

An interdisciplinary dissertation is **one** piece of work that draws on knowledge and understanding from **both** of your single fields. It does **not** require that the subject matter is balanced 50:50 between, say, Marketing and Sociology. The University guidelines say:

"An interdisciplinary dissertation is a dissertation in which there is no need for a quantitative measure of the proportion contributed by each, provided the topic is germane to each of the two fields. As such, criteria for acceptability of a topic are different from those used for a project or dissertation set wholly within the field. The topic should be formulated so that the project or dissertation may demonstrate that skills, knowledge and understanding acquired in both fields have been appropriately used. An interdisciplinary topic is seen as a desirable option, not a requirement for single field students."

So, if you are taking two single fields, we would like you to consider doing an interdisciplinary dissertation, as it may be your only opportunity to make links between the two fields that you chose. However you should be aware that it is sometimes difficult to find one topic that gives you the chance to demonstrate your mastery of, say, Accounting and Palliative Care.

**To do an interdisciplinary dissertation you need to register for two modules that have numbers of the form UXXX90, for example U50090 (accounting and finance interdisciplinary dissertation) and U51090 (business and management interdisciplinary dissertation).**

### Double dissertations (usually U5xx99)

A double dissertation is **one** piece of work that draws on knowledge from **one** of your fields. If you cannot find a topic for an interdisciplinary dissertation, then we recommend you to choose a double in one or other field.



## Getting and working with a supervisor (or two)

Fields vary slightly in their policies for allocating supervisors.

### How many supervisors?

- If you are doing a double dissertation, you will have **one** supervisor.
- If you are doing an interdisciplinary dissertation involving two different Schools of the University, you will have **two** supervisors.
- If you are doing an interdisciplinary dissertation involving two fields **within** the Business School, you may have one or two supervisors; depending on the fields and the topic (module leader will decide).

### How?

Fields vary, but within the Business School dissertation supervisors are generally allocated on the basis of your submitted Dissertation Proposal. However, if you have a particular tutor whom you would like to supervise your dissertation then you may request them as a supervisor on the front page of your dissertation proposal cover sheet (see cover sheet Appendix G).

### When?

Within the Business School supervisors are generally allocated subsequent to your hand-in of a dissertation proposal (see submission dates on page 4). Outside the Business School the process may vary. However, the absolute deadline for supervisor allocation throughout the undergraduate programme is the registration date (see registration dates on page 4) as supervisors have to agree to the registration of your dissertation module(s).

### Working with a supervisor

"Supervision" is used to cover a number of learning and teaching activities including 1:1 tutorial, small group tutorial, and commentary on drafts. Dissertation supervision starts **AFTER** you have submitted your dissertation proposal. The taught input into your dissertation takes place within the dissertation workshops.

You are expected to plan and execute the dissertation on your own initiative, but your supervisor(s) will offer encouragement and criticism at each stage of the work. Using your dissertation proposal as a starting point for purposeful discussion with your supervisor(s) will help you on your way through the dissertation process.

More guidance on working with a supervisor is given in the Dissertation Workshop, but key points to bear in mind are:

- It is **up to you** to take the initiative to contact your supervisor(s) to arrange to meet.
- Your supervisor may be extremely knowledgeable about the specific topic you have chosen, in which case you will get advice on content as well as the dissertation process. However it may be that there is no supervisor available with expert knowledge of the

particular topic you would like to do. This must be discussed with the module leader, as it may be that you will need to choose a different topic, or accept that the supervisor can only provide general assistance with content, and will therefore focus on the dissertation process.

- Supervision may not be provided through the University vacations. This means that you may not be able to arrange meetings with your supervisor after week 12 of any semester.
- If your supervisor is not available through illness or other cause, you should, in the first instance, contact the module leader.
- Your supervisor will provide commentary on **one** draft of your dissertation. The draft must be submitted to the supervisor at a date agreed between you and your supervisor but no later than three weeks before the last week of supervision (usually Week 5 of the semester in which you are going to submit). The supervisor will normally return the draft within two weeks.
- In providing feedback it should be noted that, whilst a supervisor is at liberty to comment, suggest lines of approach, and critically appraise progress this advice should not contribute substantially to the dissertation itself. Consequently, feedback may highlight problems but will not necessarily offer solutions.

You should recognise that your supervisor has many other demands on his/her time. You must therefore give adequate notice if you require an unscheduled meeting or are unable to attend a meeting.

## Ethical guidelines for research

### Introduction

All research projects at Brookes, including undergraduate dissertations, need ethical approval where human participants are involved. It is not the intention of this procedure to hamper your research activity or constrain your choice of topic. It is designed to make sure that the ethical implications of any proposed research have been properly thought through, and that you, as a researcher, have ensured as far as possible that the physical, social and psychological well-being of your research participants is not detrimentally affected by your research.

### Will this apply to my dissertation research?

Yes, if you are conducting primary research involving human participants. So if, for example, you are intending to:

- > send out a questionnaire to members of the general public, or
- > conduct focus groups with fellow students, or
- > interview employees of an organisation

you will need to think through the ethical implications of your research.

### So what do I have to do?

- / Read the University Code of Practice *Ethical Standards for Research Involving Human Participants*. Available at:  
S [http://www.brookes.ac.uk/res/policies/ethics\\_codeofpractice.pdf](http://www.brookes.ac.uk/res/policies/ethics_codeofpractice.pdf)  
S Complete a copy of the Business School *Ethical Review Form* (see Appendix J) and talk over the ethical implications of your research with your supervisor at your first meeting and get him/her to sign the form - you will be required to state that you have completed this form when you register your dissertation module.
- S **A copy of this form should be bound in with each copy of your submitted dissertation.**

### What happens next?

The checklist will show whether or not your dissertation warrants formal ethics review. If it indicates that there are no areas of concern then you keep it and submit it with your dissertation.

If you have answered "yes" to any of the questions in question 5, you will have to describe more fully how you plan to deal with the issues raised. This does not mean that the research cannot be done, only that you will have to satisfy your supervisor that the issues have been dealt with satisfactorily. If the answers on the checklist do raise issues of ethical concern the project has to be formally reviewed before ethics approval can be given. Issues that would automatically trigger ethical review include any research involving children, issues to do with deception or illegality, and where the researcher has clearly not considered how to deal with information that is potentially compromising to the informant.

**What do I do if there are ethical issues that necessitate formal approval?**

If necessary your supervisor will put you in contact with the Business School Research Ethics Officer who will discuss the issues with you and make the initial decision on the merits of the application. If necessary, she will send you another form E2, which must be completed and which will then be considered by the Research Committee and possibly by the University Research Ethics Committee if the problem is particularly difficult. Note that normally these committees meet only once a semester.

**Anything else?**

Don't forget that the new Data Protection Act covers written and printed material as well as computer data, so make sure you comply with the law. For more information on this see the Brookes intranet.

## Preparing a dissertation proposal

### The Dissertation Proposal

Experience has shown that a significant minority of students under-perform on their dissertations because they have not started early enough, and have not thought through what they want to achieve. We therefore require you to produce and submit a dissertation proposal (please see submission dates on page 4).

### The Role of the Dissertation Proposal

The Dissertation Proposal is a compulsory component of the Business School dissertation modules and is designed to provide you with an opportunity to:

- Organise your ideas
- Convince your supervisor that your dissertation is viable
- Develop an outline plan for your dissertation
- Undertake a piece of work early on in the programme of study

Please be aware that a supervisor will be allocated to you on the basis of your topic selected as shown in your proposal and as such we do not expect you to consult with individual tutors about your proposal prior to its hand-in. The Business Dissertations Guide on the Brookes Virtual site will provide you with a selection of model proposals, and also some ideas for topic selection. Note! If you do not have access to this site, contact Undergraduate Office and apply for registration, stating your student number.

### Submission of the Dissertation Proposal

Your dissertation proposal including a cover sheet (Appendix G) should be submitted to the Undergraduate Office (W2.07) in the Simon Williams' Building - see page 4 for submission dates.

Your supervisor will use your proposal as the main vehicle for discussion in your early supervision meetings.

### Choosing a Dissertation Topic

You should choose a topic that falls within the subject area of your chosen dissertation module discipline - but please note that a broad view is taken of the subject areas - please see the list of example dissertation titles in the business dissertations guide on Brookes Virtual. If you are in any doubt of the suitability of your chosen topic please consult with your dissertation module leader.

### Questions to ask yourself

Guidance on questions to ask yourself in deciding on your choice of academic content can be found on the Business Dissertations Guide on the Brookes Virtual site

## **The Content of the Dissertation Proposal**

Normally a proposal is no longer than one page. Examples of a research proposal are contained in Unit 4 of the Business Dissertations Guide on Brookes Virtual.

### **WORKING TITLE**

This may change as your work progresses; at this stage it should closely mirror the content of your proposal.

### **BACKGROUND**

Your background sets your research into context. Just what is it that makes you want to develop this particular area of business? Have you found some aspect of the business topic which you think requires advanced investigation?

### **APPROACH**

In this section you will state how you will go about your research and state shortly what research methods you will use. Thus, if you are doing some primary research, you will state what method or methods you will use - questionnaires, for example.

### **WORK CONSULTED**

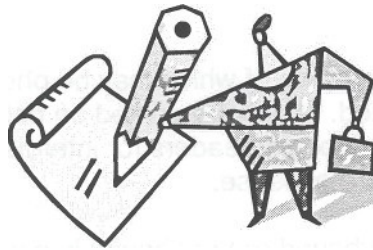
In this section you simply state what secondary sources you have already read in connection with your proposed title. Normally this will be books, articles etc which you have read in connection with an earlier module taken by you, and which you intend to develop in your dissertation.

## Registering your module(s)

**Note: You can not register for your Dissertation online.**

For registration on to the Module you will complete an M199 form. M199 forms are available from the Student Administration Office, the Business School's Undergraduate Office (W2.07 Simon Williams Building), or from dissertation module leaders.

After the submission of your proposal you will be allocated a supervisor whom you should contact as soon as possible. Your supervisor will sign your M199 dissertation registration form at your first meeting. This form must then be signed by the module leader and submitted to the Business School's Undergraduate Office (W2.07) at Wheatley. Once they have copied it the form will then be forwarded to be registered on PIP.



*Important: The M199 dissertation registration form requires you to get agreement (and signatures) from:  
your supervisor(s), and:  
the dissertation module leader.*

**DEADLINE FOR REGISTERING DISSERTATION MODULES - PLEASE SEE PAGE 4**

## Dissertation format

### Introduction

Whilst these notes provide general information students are also advised to check matters of presentation with their dissertation supervisor.

### Dissertation Length

The appropriate length or style of a dissertation will vary according to the topic chosen. As a guide, a written dissertation for a double module should normally be of the order of 8,000 words with a maximum of 10,000 words. Dissertations exceeding the maximum length will normally be given fewer marks than work of similar quality that falls within the maximum length.

### Presentation

Two properly presented word processed (one of which may be photocopied) A4 copies of a project or dissertation must be submitted. It may be printed on both sides of the paper with 1.5 or double line spacing throughout. Module Leaders for interdisciplinary dissertations may request a third copy, at the School's expense.

All dissertations should be either spiral bound or heat bound in a white card cover or an Oxford Brookes University cover (obtainable from the print room at the Gipsy Lane campus) and contain, in order:

**A title page** (obtainable from the Undergraduate Office at Wheatley, Room W2.07 in the Simon Williams' Building), appendix H of this guide. The title page should list in order the title of the project/dissertation, the student's surname and initials, and the note "This dissertation is submitted in part fulfilment of the regulations for BA/BSc/BEd/BEng/LLB Honours Degree". At the bottom of the page the name "Oxford Brookes University" and year should be included.

**A signed statement of originality** and (if agreed with your supervisor) a signed statement that the Head of Undergraduate Programmes is responsible for limiting the extent to which work may be made available for photocopying and inter-library loan (obtainable from the Undergraduate Office at Wheatley, Room W2.07 in the Simon Williams' Building) Appendix H of this guide.

You should also bind in a copy of your **Ethical Review Form** (see appendix J) with each copy of your dissertation.

### ICELS Dissertation Checking Service

Please note that the International Centre for English Language (ICELS) operates a service for overseas students (also open to home students) about to submit a dissertation. The Centre offers to check dissertations and make corrections for language errors (not content). A fee is payable.

If you would like more information please telephone ICELS on 01865-483874 - or e-mail the Centre on: [icels@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:icels@brookes.ac.uk)



## Content

There is, of course, a significant variation in the format and structure of dissertations, and whilst we do not want to be prescriptive, students in the past have asked for some guidance on the format of content. The structure outlined below is probably the most common. Presentation within this format may not necessarily improve quality of content, but it does ensure that results are ordered in a professional manner.

The three major parts of a dissertation are:

1. Preliminary material
2. Text (including tables and figures)
3. Reference material and appendices

### 1. PRELIMINARY MATERIAL

It is usual for the pages comprising the preliminary material to be numbered in lower case Roman Numerals (e.g. iii).

- i. Title Page
- ii. Signed Statement of Originality and Confidentiality
- iii. Abstract  
A paged headed ABSTRACT should briefly mention the nature, scope and objectives of the dissertation, and should also mention the sources and methods used for the study. It should not exceed 250 words in length (in addition to the permitted 10,000) and should be typed in 1.5 or double spacing on one side of A4 paper.
- v. Acknowledgements  
Acknowledgement of whatever assistance has been received by the writer in the course of the dissertation.
- vi. Table of Contents  
For a large piece of work such as a dissertation we suggest that it will be easier to use the automatic table of contents feature in Microsoft Word. If you do not know how to use this feature - it will be well worth the learning!
- vii. List of Tables  
Tables should be numbered consecutively in the order to which they are referred in the text.
- viii. List of Figures  
Figures include all illustrations, photographs and maps which should be numbered consecutively in the order to which they are referred to in the text.

### 2. TEXT

The text should be appropriately divided. There should be an introduction and a series of numbered and headed chapters. All chapters, including the introduction, are numbered consecutively. The introduction should clearly define the objectives of your study and summarise the way you achieved them. Starting with the first page of the introduction (after the preliminary material) the pages should be marked consecutively in Arabic numerals (e.g. 1, 2, 3). The text should be 1.5 or double spaced.

**Headings and Sub-headings**

In such a large piece of work as a dissertation the division of material through the appropriate use of headings and sub-headings is necessary to guide the reader through your study. Make sure you leave enough time to ensure that the formatting of your headings and sub-headings is consistent throughout the dissertation.

**Abbreviations**

Abbreviations unknown to the reader are an irritant. If there is any doubt the word should be spelled out in full the first time they are used, with the abbreviations in brackets immediately afterwards. For example, 'Sex Discrimination Act (SDA)'.

**Illustrations**

Diagrams, photographs and maps should show clearly and simply what cannot be economically described in the text. They are all known as 'Figures' and are numbered consecutively. It is usual for figure numbers and titles to be placed at the bottom of the illustration. Be careful that they are clearly labelled and explained.

**3. REFERENCE MATERIAL**

This comprises the Appendix or Appendices, the -Reference list and the Bibliography

**Appendices**

The appendices provide an outlet for material that is not absolutely necessary for full comprehension of the text. An appendix or appendices may include for example lengthy tables of raw data, lists of company names etc. Appendices should be kept to a minimum. Appendix numbers and appendix titles should, where possible, be placed at the top of the appendix. Appendices do not count towards the word count.

**Referencing**

Use of the Harvard system of referencing is recommended - the British Standard System of referencing has proven fragile in the past when used with Microsoft Word in large pieces of work such as a dissertation.

For details on how to cite your sources (including internet sites) we recommend that you consult 'citing your sources' on the Brookes intranet - see Appendix F

Remember the three most important points in referencing:

- > Credit must be given when quoting or citing other work
- > Adequate information must be provided in the bibliography to enable a reader to locate the references
- > Referencing should be as consistent as possible

## Hand-in and evaluation

### Hand-in dates and instructions

**Key Dates for Dissertations registered for submission in Semester 2, 2009/2010  
(appropriate for students graduating in Summer 2010)**

PROPOSAL DUE IN	REGISTRATION DATE	DISSERTATION DUE IN
<b>4.00 pm 20th April 2009</b> (Monday - Week 10, Semester 2)	<b>4.00 pm 25th September 2009</b> (Friday - Week 0, Semester 1)  This is a University Deadline - it is your responsibility to make sure you are registered for a dissertation module by this date. However, the Business School may use its discretion to accept forms up to the end of Week 1.	<b>4.00 pm 26th March 2010</b> (Friday - Week 8, Semester 2)  Late submission penalties are strictly applied - leave enough time for formatting and printing your dissertation - problems should be expected with a piece of work of this size

<i>Credit entry students only</i>	<i>Credit entry students only</i>
<b>4.00 pm 23rd October 2009</b> (Friday - Week 4, Semester 1)	<b>4.00 pm. 13th November 2009</b> (Friday - Week 7, Semester 1)

**Key Dates for Dissertations registered for submission in Semester 1, 2009/2010  
(appropriate for students graduating in January 2010 - very few students will fall into this category)**

<b>4.00pm 24th November, 2008</b> (Monday - Week 10, Semester 1)	<b>4.00pm 30th January, 2009</b> (Friday - Week 0, Semester 2)  This is a University Deadline - it is your responsibility to make sure you are registered for a dissertation module by this date	<b>4.00 pm 20th November 2009</b> (Friday - Week 8, Semester 1)  Late submission penalties are strictly applied - leave enough time for formatting and printing your dissertation - problems should be expected with a piece of work of this size.
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You **must** submit your **proposal** to the **Undergraduate Office, Room W2.07 in the Simon Williams' Building at the Wheatley Campus**. They should **not** be given directly to your supervisor.

You **must** submit 2 copies of your printed, bound, final **dissertation**. For single, double and interdisciplinary dissertations wholly within the Business School, both copies should be brought to the **Undergraduate Office, Room W2.07 in the Simon Williams' Building at the Wheatley Campus**. For interdisciplinary dissertations involving another School, one copy should be taken to each School.

## **Authenticating your coursework**

You must be able to demonstrate that the course work you submit for assessment is your own. You must therefore keep (whether electronically or on paper) working documents that you used or created while preparing the assignment, such as drafts, photocopies of sources, completed questionnaires and internet pages (if appropriate). These should be kept until after the module results have been published on PIP.

## **Feedback**

Feedback on your dissertation will be posted out to your home address during the vacation following dissertation submission. You will be given the opportunity to collect one copy of your dissertation before you leave the University - please check your e-mail for details. There will be no mark or comments written on the dissertation itself.

We would also advise you to bind one copy to keep for yourself - occasionally prospective employers ask to see a copy of your dissertation.

## **Student evaluation of the module**

As with the other modules you take, we are concerned to get your feedback on how the learning experience was for you. The different Business School fields take different approaches to getting this feedback, but you may be asked to participate in a focus group, or complete an evaluation questionnaire. We would be very grateful if you could give us your honest views on your experience - as ever, it may not help you, but can benefit those who take dissertations in the future.

## Assessment details

The final mark you will achieve for your dissertation is at least partly based on a recommended mark from the Business School. In the case of a double or single dissertation, that mark may be changed by the Examination Committee. In the case of interdisciplinary dissertations, both fields propose marks, and they then have to negotiate and agree between them one unified recommended mark to be put to the Examination Committee. Once again, this mark may be changed by the Committee.

### OUTCOMES ASSESSED

The exact outcomes depend on the particular dissertation module you are taking (full details can be accessed on the PIP pages for the particular dissertation module you are taking) but a student completing a typical dissertation should be able to:

#### Knowledge and Understanding

- demonstrate a systematic and detailed understanding of key aspects of a specific field of knowledge within a particular discipline some of which is at, or informed by, the forefront of the discipline.
- select and deploy appropriate techniques of analysis and enquiry
- demonstrate a conceptual understanding that enables the student:
  - > to devise and sustain arguments and/or to solve problems.
  - > to describe and comment upon particular aspects of current research, or equivalent advanced scholarship, in the discipline
- demonstrate an appreciation of the uncertainty, ambiguity and limits of knowledge

#### Disciplinary/Professional Skills

- evaluate and select suitable approaches for the collection of material relevant to the specific topic through secondary research or a combination of secondary and primary research
- source and select appropriate academic and commercial published literature
- synthesise and critically evaluate arguments, abstract concepts and data (that may be incomplete), to arrive at substantiated conclusions
- communicate information, concepts and arguments clearly and coherently following the conventions laid down in the Dissertation Guide
- plan and manage their own learning within an extended study

#### Transferable Skills

- Self management
- Written communication
- Problem solving
- Learning skills
- IT

### THE DISSERTATION

Prepare a dissertation on a topic relevant to your field of study. This should demonstrate your ability to marshal evidence, argue coherently, evaluate critically, synthesise the disparate sources used, and identify and work with appropriate theoretical methods. It does not necessarily involve original research or the study of unpublished or primary material, but if it does, appropriate methods should be used.

**CRITERIA FOR ASSESSMENT**

- Clarity of objectives and focus of work
- Methodology
- Use of literature and evidence of reading
- Reflection / Evaluation
- Synthesis of theoretical framework and evidence
- Structure, presentation and communication

A set of descriptors, that indicate the level of performance required in each of these criteria can be found in Appendix D.

## Appendix A: Regulations

### 1. ASSESSMENT REQUIREMENTS, PROCEDURES AND PENALTIES

1.1 The appropriate length or style of a dissertation will vary according to the topic chosen. As a guide, a written dissertation for a double module should normally be of the order of 8,000 words with a maximum of 10,000 words. Dissertations exceeding the maximum length will normally be given fewer marks than work of similar quality that is within the maximum length.

1.2 Dissertations are normally assessed by two internal examiners, and may be moderated by one but not two external examiners.

1.3 If a dissertation is submitted up to two weeks later than the prescribed deadline the work will be marked but the following penalty will be imposed.

- Up to 1 week late 10 marks will be deducted.
- More than one week late, but less than 2 weeks, 20 marks will be deducted.
- Except that no student who would have been awarded a pass grade before the penalty was imposed will be awarded less than C40%.

1.4 If the dissertation is submitted more than two weeks late the Subject Examination Committee will consider all the circumstances and decide whether it should be marked and if so whether it should be awarded C40% (the maximum mark allowed in such circumstances) or a fail grade. If a decision is made to award marks then the Chair of the SEC is expected to raise it with the Chief External Examiners according to normal practice.

1.5 Problems in printing or binding will not be accepted as valid reasons for lateness - whatever their nature.

### 2. RESIT PROCEDURES AND DEADLINES

For a copy of the resit procedures and deadlines please contact the Undergraduate Office, **Room W2.07 in the Simon Williams' Building at Wheatley.**

### 3. SUPERVISORS' AND ASSESSORS' REPORTS

Both internal assessors (one of whom will normally be the supervisor) will submit a written report for assessment purposes. Indication of the input given by the supervisor, and the general approach of the student during the production of the dissertation will be included. In the case of interdisciplinary dissertations one assessor will normally be drawn from each of the two fields.

The Assessors' report will be in two parts:

- a commentary which will be used for feedback to the student
- a summary, including a mark and grade recommendation for the Module Leader, External Examiner and Examinations Committee.

**4. PROBLEMS WITH INTERDISCIPLINARY DISSERTATIONS**

If students find that the requirements for style, format or content from the two fields are incompatible or otherwise appear to inhibit the appropriate investigation of an approved topic, they should consult the Module Leaders immediately, who should resolve the problem as a matter of urgency. In cases of difficulty the Assistant Dean should be consulted. SEC must therefore have delegated to the Module Leader responsibility for agreeing modifications to the Field Requirements for Interdisciplinary project/dissertation in appropriate circumstances.

**5. SUBMISSION OF DISSERTATIONS**

5.1 Two properly presented word processed (one of which may be photocopied) A4 copies of a project or dissertation must be submitted. It may be printed on both sides of the paper with 1.5 line spacing throughout. Module Leaders for interdisciplinary projects/dissertations may request a third copy, at the School's expense.

5.2 All dissertations should be either spiral bound or heatbound in a University card cover (obtainable from the Print Room) and contain, in order:

5.3 A title page, obtainable from the Undergraduate Office (W2.07) at Wheatley, bearing in order the title of the dissertation, the student's surname and initials, and the note "This dissertation is submitted in part fulfilment of the regulations for BA/BSc/BEd/BEng/LLB Honours Degree". At the bottom of the page the name "Oxford Brookes University" and year should be included.

This page is also available as a document for Word in this guide on the Brookes Virtual dissertation support site and on the U Drive located under Data/Busdiss/Cover-sheet.

5.4 A signed statement of the originality and (if agreed) a signed statement that the Head of Undergraduate Programmes is responsible for limiting the extent to which work may be made available for photocopying and inter-library loan (also available at the back of this guide, from the Undergraduate Office at Wheatley, Room W2.07 in the Simon Williams' Building at the Wheatley Campus and in the Brookes Virtual dissertation support site).

5.5 A copy of a completed and signed Ethical Review form

5.6 Copyright of the dissertation rests with the student.

5.7 Some Schools have their own binding facilities; otherwise students should use Print room Service or outside commercial binding companies.

5.8 The entire cost of production of the dissertation will be borne by the student, although in cases involving field work reimbursement of some costs involved in research may be negotiated by Schools. Schools should also supply material for laboratory-based projects.

**6. DEPOSIT AND USE OF DISSERTATIONS**

6.1 The "top" copies of dissertations submitted in fulfilment of Modular Programme requirements shall normally be kept by the School for one year. In cases where the "top" copy incorporates examples of original artwork, photographs, etc., it may be returned on request to the student after consideration by the External Examiner. In these instances a second copy must be retained by the School.



- 6.2 The author is advised to sign a declaration agreeing that the dissertation be available for reading and photocopying only at the discretion of the Head of Undergraduate Programmes in accordance with 6.3 and 6.4 below.
- 6.3 The Head of Undergraduate Programmes shall safeguard the interests of the author by requiring persons who consult the dissertation to sign a declaration acknowledging the author's copyright.
- 6.4 Permission for any one other than the author to reproduce or photocopy any part of the dissertation must be obtained from the Head of Undergraduate Programmes who will give his/her permission for such reproduction only to an extent which he/she considers to be fair and reasonable.

## Appendix B: Cheating

All assessments are intended to determine the skills, abilities, understanding and knowledge of each of the individual students undertaking the assessment. Cheating is defined as obtaining an unfair academic advantage and any student found using any form of cheating, attempting to cheat or assisting someone else to cheat may be subject to disciplinary action in accordance with the University's Disciplinary Procedure. The University takes this issue very seriously and students have been expelled or had their degrees withheld for cheating in assessments. If you are having difficulty with your work it is important to seek help from your tutor rather than be tempted to use unfair means to gain marks. Do not risk losing your degree and all the work you have done.

The University's regulations define a number of different forms of cheating, although any form of cheating is strictly forbidden. These are:

- submitting other people's work as your own - either with or without their knowledge. This includes copying in examinations; using notes or unauthorised materials in examinations;
- impersonation - taking an assessment on behalf of or pretending to be another student, or allowing another person to take an assessment on your behalf or pretend to be you;
- plagiarism - taking or using another person's thoughts, writings or inventions as your own. To avoid plagiarism you must make sure that quotations from whatever source must be clearly identified and attributed at the point where they occur in the text of your work by using one of the standard conventions for referencing. The Library has a leaflet about how to reference your work correctly and your tutor can also help you. It is not enough just to list sources in a bibliography at the end of your essay or dissertation if you do not acknowledge the actual quotations in the text. Neither is it acceptable to change some of the words or the order of sentences if, by failing to acknowledge the source properly, you give the impression that it is your own work;
- collusion - except where written instructions specify that work for assessment may be produced jointly and submitted as the work of more than one student, you must not collude with others to produce a piece of work jointly, copy or share another student's work or lend your work to another student in the reasonable knowledge that some or all of it will be copied;
- duplication - submitting work for assessment that is the same as, or broadly similar to, work submitted earlier for academic credit, without acknowledgement of the previous submission;
- falsification - the invention of data, its alteration, its copying from any other source, or otherwise obtaining it by unfair means, or inventing quotations and/or references.

Stephen Marshall, Academic Registrar, May 2002

*You must be able to demonstrate that the course work you submit for assessment is your own. You must therefore keep (whether electronically or on paper) working documents that you used or created while preparing the assignment, such as drafts, photocopies of sources, completed questionnaires and internet pages (if appropriate). These should be kept until after the module results have been published on PIP.*

## Appendix C: Criteria for extension of deadlines

Module leaders for dissertations have the responsibility for approving extensions of up to two weeks.

### CRITERIA

The following criteria should be used when deciding whether to allow an extension.

A recommendation must be made in writing before the original deadline by the supervisor(s) and must be for a specific length of extension.

The recommendation must state the grounds for the extension and include reference to appropriate evidence that the supervisor has seen.

The recommended extension must NOT be more than 2 weeks.

The grounds must be based on (a) particular circumstance(s) which is/are clearly beyond the student's control and which do not constitute a contingency for which provision should have been made.

Examples of such circumstances are:

- a medical certificate covering indisposition for a period at which key work was due to be carried out
- late arrangement of supervision because admission with credit took place;
- an unexpected bereavement
- a failure of a third party to honour a previously arranged agreement to provide data or facilities
- a failure of University equipment that had been allocated for the project
- absence of a supervisor at a point when key supervision had been specifically planned

Examples of circumstances which would not normally be sufficient for an extension:

- loss of a computer disk (backups should be kept)
- failure of a printer (printing should be done well in advance of the deadline)
- change of (paid) work schedule, unless imposed at short notice by management (evidence required)

When deciding whether the grounds are sufficient, the following points should always be considered in relation to the request:

- did the circumstances occur at a key point?
- has the student kept the supervisor informed of progress so that a valid judgement of the effect of the circumstances can be made?
- are the circumstances simply "normal problems" for which most students would not expect an extension so that granting an extension in this would give the student an advantage over other students?

## Appendix D: Guidelines on marking standards

CRITERION	A	B+	B	C	REFER/FAIL
<b>Clarity of objectives and focus of project</b>	Has defined objectives in detail and addressed them comprehensively and imaginatively	Has defined objectives and addressed them throughout the project	Has outlined objectives and addressed them at the end of the project	Has provided generalised objectives and focused the project on the topic area	Fails to define objectives and/or relate topic to objectives
<b>Methodology</b>	Methodology used is the most appropriate to the aims and objectives of the task, and the process and rationale for its selection is provided	Attention is given to the selection of a methodology and the method chosen is appropriate to the task	Methodology is appropriate to the task	Methodology lacks clarity and/or may not be the most appropriate but there is evidence of a planned approach	Issue of methodology not addressed and/or inappropriate methodology used and/or little planning used to complete the task
<b>Use of Literature / evidence of reading</b>	Has developed and justified using own ideas based on a wide range of sources which have been thoroughly analysed, applied and discussed	Able to critically appraise the literature and theory gained from a variety of sources, developing own ideas in the process	Clear evidence and application of readings relevant to the subject; uses indicative texts identified by supervisor	Literature is presented uncritically, in a purely descriptive way and indicates limitations of understanding	Either no evidence of literature being consulted or irrelevant to the topic
<b>Reflection / evaluation</b>	Can critically review evidence supporting conclusions / recommendations including its reliability, validity and significance and can investigate contradictory information / identify reasons for contradictions	Can select appropriate techniques of evaluation and can evaluate the relevance and significance of data collected	Can evaluate the reliability of data using defined techniques and/or tutor guidance	Limited and only partially accurate evaluation of data using defined techniques and / or tutor guidance	Fails to evaluate or use techniques of evaluation, or evaluations are totally invalid
<b>Synthesis of theoretical framework and evidence</b>	With minimum guidance can transform abstract data and concepts towards a given purpose and can design novel solutions	Can reformat a range of ideas/information towards a given purpose	Can collect, collate and categorise ideas and information in a predictable and standard format	Partially collects/collates and categorises information in a structured way	No organisation of ideas and information
<b>Structure, presentation and communication</b>	Shows a polished and imaginative approach to the topic.  Fluent academic writing style. Grammar and spelling accurate	Carefully and logically organised.  Language fluent  Grammar and spelling accurate	Shows organisation and coherence.  Language mainly fluent.  Grammar and spelling mainly accurate	Shows some attempt to organise in a logical manner. Meaning apparent, but language not always fluent. Grammar and/or spelling contain errors	Disorganised/incoherent.  Meaning unclear and/or grammar and/or spelling contain frequent errors

## Failure and resubmission

A mark from 30% to 39% inclusive normally means the dissertation can be resubmitted. A mark below 30% means that the dissertation has been failed, it cannot be resubmitted, and if needed, a new registration would have to be made to take a new dissertation.

**FAILURE:** Comes automatically from Plagiarism; inadequate or bogus evidencing of sources.  
More usually failure is due to insufficient evidence of study: seriously defective knowledge or understanding; inability to address the topic; failure to attend to required modes of presentation; illiterate writing.  
Failure to take advantage of supervisor's help and guidance is often a major factor.

**RESUBMISSION:** The work does not sufficiently demonstrate the crucial achievement of a basic grasp of what the topic is about, but with a little additional work this could be properly demonstrated. This would normally be possible (if 30% or more had been achieved initially) by:  
For example: rewriting one chapter clarifying some conclusions in relation to the evidence; correcting errors or omissions; improving presentation  
It would not be normal to give this grade where substantial additional literature research or investigation was necessary.

In any case where circumstances beyond the student's control (such as the breakdown of equipment), is believed to have affected performance in relation to the criteria above, the assessors will expect to receive statements and evidence as to the facts from the student and the supervisor(s) and then to make appropriate recommendations.

## Appendix E: Guide to using the dissertation database

The Dissertation Database currently holds the last five years of the Business School's dissertations, including those for MBA, MSc, DMS, Modular BA's, full and part-time. The database also holds dissertations from the Schools of Architecture, Estate Management and Planning and Urban Design.

### How to search the Library catalogue for dissertations

All dissertations previously held on the Idealist database are now available on the Library Catalogue and can be searched for both on and off campus using the Catalogue. For cataloguing purposes the term *dissertation* has been replaced by the term *thesis* and can be combined with other subject keywords in a Keyword search to help you find dissertations in the Library.

What you need to do if ...

You know the author of the dissertation - Use author search - surname [comma] first name or initial

You know the name of the school associated with the dissertation - Use author search - enter the name of the school in full, eg **Business School, School of Education, Westminster Institute of Education** (2001- dissertations) or **School of Planning**

You know the title of the dissertation - Use title search - omit initial articles

You know the author and the title of the dissertation - Use author/title or author/keyword search

You know the shelfmark location of the Wheatley dissertation - Use shelfmark search, eg **B1902**

You want to look at some examples of MEd dissertations - Use keyword search - **thesis MEd** (upper or lower case). Please note, the term *thesis* now replaces *dissertation*. Similarly, use keyword search as above for MTh, MA, MSc, MBA, DMS, and **BA dissertations (for undergraduate dissertations)**

**You want to know what dissertations have been produced under module U51099 (Business and Management single disciplinary dissertation) - Use keyword search - U51099**

You want to look at some examples of dissertations supervised by a particular tutor - Use author search - author's surname [comma] first name or initial. Please note, not all supervisors were entered into the Idealist database. Therefore, you will not find author entries on the Catalogue for some tutors.

You want to look at some examples of dissertations on planning in London - Use keyword search - **London, planning, thesis.** Please note, the term *thesis* now replaces *dissertation*.

You want to look at some examples of MSc Business School dissertations produced in 2002 - Use author/keyword search and limit by date of publication, eg **Business School, MSc, 2002**

## **Appendix F: Referencing using the Harvard system**

Valuable information on referencing can be found on the Oxford Brookes intranet at the following locations:

### **CITING YOUR REFERENCES USING THE HARVARD (AUTHOR - DATE) SYSTEM**

A good source is available at  
<http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/library/resources/harvard.doc>

There is also a document relating to citing web resources:

Evaluating Web sources is available at  
<http://www.brookes.ac.uk/services/library/webeval.html>

## **Appendix G: Dissertation Proposal Cover Sheet**

*Sample - Also available from the Undergraduate Office, Room W2.07 in the Simon Williams' Building at Wheatley.*

**Student Name:**

**Student No.**

**Field(s):**

**Dissertation Module:**

**Name of Dissertation Module Leader:**

**Proposed submission date:**

**Supervisor requested:**

(Please note: Business School supervisors are normally allocated but you may request a particular member of academic staff, however, we cannot guarantee you will get your requested supervisor)

Working Title of Dissertation



## Appendix H: Dissertation Cover Sheet and Statement of Originality/Confidentiality

*Sample - Also available from the Undergraduate Office, Room W2.07 in the Simon Williams' Building at Wheatley.*

**Dissertation  
Module Number**

**Single/  
Double, etc.**

**Title**

**Student  
Number**

**Surname**

**Other  
Names**

Fields for which acceptable

Date of submission

Name of Supervisor:

This dissertation is submitted in part fulfilment of the regulations for BA/BSc/BEd/  
BEng/LLB\* Honours Degree, Oxford Brookes University, date:\_\_\_\_\_

\* Delete as appropriate

**Statement of originality**

**Except for those parts in which it is explicitly stated to the contrary, this project is my own work. It has not been submitted for any degree at this or any other academic or professional institutions.**

**Signature****Date**

Regulations Governing the Deposit and Use of Oxford Brookes University Modular Programme Projects and Dissertations

1. The 'top' copies of projects, dissertations submitted in fulfilment of Modular Programme requirements shall normally be kept by Schools.
2. The author shall sign a declaration agreeing that the project/dissertation be available for reading and photocopying at the discretion of the Head of Undergraduate Programmes in accordance with 3 and 4 below.
3. The Head of Undergraduate Programmes shall safeguard the interests of the author by requiring persons who consult the project/dissertation to sign a declaration acknowledging the author's copyright.
4. Permission for any one other than the author to reproduce or photocopy any part of the dissertation must be obtained from the Head of Undergraduate Programmes who will give his/her permission for such reproduction only to an extent which he / she considers to be fair and reasonable.

I agree that this dissertation may / may not be available for reading and photocopying at the discretion of my Head of Undergraduate Programmes in accordance with regulations 3 and 4 above \*

**Signature****Date**

\* The underlined words may be deleted by the author if he/she so wishes.

## Appendix I: Ethical Review Form

Form E1 - Sample - Also available from the Undergraduate Office, Room W2.07 in the Simon Williams' Building at Wheatley.

Students and staff members are required to observe the highest ethical standards when undertaking research. The Business School requires both students and staff undertaking research to comply with the University *Code of Practice Involving Human Participants*. The checklist below is intended to help you reflect on possible issues of ethical concern arising from your proposed programme of research. All students must attach the completed checklist to dissertations, theses, projects and relevant course work.

1. Working Title of Proposed Research
  
2. Broad Research Objectives
  
3. Who are your proposed research participants?
  
4. How are you going to gather data from these participants?
  
5. Does your proposed research involve any of the following:
 

Deception of participants?	Yes/No
Financial inducements?	Yes/No
Possible psychological stress?	Yes/No
Access to confidential information?	Yes/No
Any other special circumstances?	Yes/No
  
6. If you have answered "yes" to any of question 5, how will you deal with these issues?
  
7. I have read and understood the University Code of Practice on research involving human participants

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

In my view, the student has considered the ethical issues involved in this piece of work

Name of tutor: \_\_\_\_\_ Signature: \_\_\_\_\_