M144 Project and Dissertation Guidelines for Students

1. Regulations, rationale and definitions

To achieve an Honours Degree, a student must pass at least 6 acceptable Honours Level module credits. This will normally include 2 module credits of dissertations, project or synoptic study. These studies should demonstrate that an Honours student can successfully collect data and select appropriate knowledge from the range he/she has acquired, can propose solutions for appropriate problems and communicate the results, and that the student can work independently.

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 It does not necessarily involve original research or the study of unpublished or primary material.

A project is also an extended study of a topic, but in addition usually involves data collection through experimental work or primary investigation. As such, it should demonstrate similar abilities to those listed for a dissertation and in addition the ability to plan experiments or data collection and interpret and analyse data.

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

2. Registration

Students can register for a project or dissertation module in the module registration window prior to the start of their final year. Students admitted with credit to the final year of a programme may need to register their dissertation soon after enrolment in Semester 1. Part-time students would normally register no later than two semesters before their expected completion date. One year before the final semester, students can expect to be briefed by the Project/Dissertation Module Leaders in their Subject/s on the specific Subject Requirements and the supervision arrangements available. Part-time students should check when these meetings are taking place and make every effort to attend. At the time specified by the Subject, the student will negotiate
with a supervisor to agree a provisional topic and supervision arrangements. For interdisciplinary projects/dissertations, one of the subjects will be given administrative responsibility for assessment etc.

3. Supervision and study

Student responsibilities:

It is a student’s responsibility to ensure that he/she meets the Subject rules for the contact with supervisors, and the regulations on submission of the work which are described in Section 5 below, as well as those subject specific requirements set out in the relevant Subject Guide. Students are encouraged to calculate the time and effort spent on project/dissertation modules on the same basis as for all other modules: i.e. approximately 300 hours for a double module.

Staff responsibilities:

It is the Subject Module Leader’s responsibility to make available to students a Subject Guide, laying out Subject specific regulations on such matters as timetabling, conduct of study, presentation and style formats, and what to do if a student has problems with their supervisor. A student may expect a minimum of 4 hours supervision per credit of a project/dissertation some of which may be in small group tutorials. The word supervision is used to cover a number of learning and teaching activities including individual tutorials, small group tutorials, or commentary on drafts.

Interdisciplinary problems:

If students find that the requirements for style, format or content from the two subjects are incompatible or otherwise appear to inhibit the appropriate investigation of the approved topic, they should consult the Module Leaders immediately, who should resolve the problem as a matter of urgency. In case of difficulty, Student Central should be consulted.

4. Submission

As of September 2018, all dissertations will be submitted electronically (rather than in hard copy) by 4.00pm on Friday of Week 8 of the semester in which the module is to be assessed. Please contact the Dissertation Module Leader with any queries relating to the submission format or deadline.
5. Extension of deadlines

The University has approved a way in which circumstances that may have affected your performance in an assessment will be considered. These are called “exceptional circumstances”. For full details, see our exceptional circumstances webpages.

6. Late submission

Late coursework will receive no marks. This penalty is imposed so that students who submit work on time even though it is not as good as they would like are not at a disadvantage when compared with students who choose to miss the deadline and spend longer on their work so that they may do better. In fairness then, to all students, Module Leaders are required to impose this penalty for late coursework except where students have negotiated extensions in advance through exceptional circumstances for reasons outside their control.

7. Withdrawal or change of registration

Withdrawal:

Changes to module registration are only permitted during the relevant module registration window. Once the module registration window has closed it is not possible to withdraw from the dissertation once the module has been registered.

Change of registration:

A student or supervisor may consider a dissertation/project has changed direction during work on it and may wish to transfer the Registration from one (set of) module number(s) to another, or from one Subject to another. The Module Leader must approve the change and an M99 form should be completed to adjust the module codes.

8. Assessment requirements and assessment feedback

The appropriate length or style of a project report or dissertation will vary according to the topic chosen; a written dissertation for a double module should normally be of the order of 8,000 words with a maximum of 10,000 words. Subjects will specify Subject specific lengths if they are below this length. Reports or dissertations exceeding the maximum length will normally be given fewer marks than work of a similar quality that is below the maximum length. Students cannot expect feedback or a Grade assessment on their work, before all the marks for dissertations/projects have been assessed by the two internal markers, moderated by the relevant Subject External Examiner, and ratified by the Modular Examinations Committee, which meets during the vacation. However, Module Leaders will have informed students on how they
may receive feedback after this process is complete, even if the students have completed their course by that date.

9. Resubmission: criteria and arrangements

If the project or dissertation is not assessed as a pass grade (a mark lower than 40%), so long as an original attempt is submitted a student will be entitled to a resit. Students who do not attempt the first submission will not be eligible for a resit. The Module Leader will inform the student of the resit requirements following release of the results. Resubmitted projects must be submitted at the normal resit deadlines. If a resubmitted project is passed, the result will be capped at 40%, unless an uncapped resit has been awarded due to exceptional circumstances, for which full marks are awarded.

Students intending to go on an Exchange in their final year:

Students going on exchange are expected to make arrangements with their supervisor before they leave the UK and it is their responsibility to keep in touch with the supervisor and to keep them appraised of any developments or changes of direction whilst they are away.

10. Copyright

Copyright of the project/dissertation rests with the student.