

# Project and Dissertation Guide for Staff

## Introduction

A Dissertation is an extended study of a topic agreed as appropriate for a subject. 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 It does not necessarily involve original research or the study of unpublished or primary material.

A Project is also an extended study of a topic, but usually also involves data collection through experimental work or other 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. In some subjects, such as management subjects, most submissions contain elements of both the project/dissertation perspectives. Fuller briefing on the approach expected is included in the specific subject guidelines.

An Interdisciplinary Project or Dissertation is a project/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/dissertation set wholly within one subject. The topic should be formulated so that the project/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. Not all subjects offer both Projects and Dissertations. Single Honours subjects do not offer interdisciplinary Projects/Dissertations.

## Guidelines for Subject Guides

These guidelines are designed to be included in Subject Guides to Project and Dissertations. In some sections, therefore, there are pointers (\*) to indicate the need for Subject Specific Guidelines. These should be inserted after appropriate consideration of the Notes for Project/Dissertation Module Leaders, which are normally in italic text in square brackets. These would not normally be included in Subject Guides. Subject Guides for Project and Dissertations should include the following:

- i. A Subject Guide needs to make clear the UMP regulations and guidelines with subject specific items included where they are appropriate.
- ii. A guide will usually include academic advice, administrative rules and assessment regulations.

iii. Sections normally included will cover:

- Choosing a topic and registering it
- Arrangements for Supervision and responsibility of supervisors and of students
- Guidance for writing the project/dissertation report, including structure and conventions
- Assessment criteria and feedback arrangements.

It may be useful to include the M144 Project and Dissertation Guidelines for Students in your Module Guide.

## Dissertation timeline

The process and timetable from initiation is summarised as follows:

### Year 1 Semester 2:

Students should include the Project/Dissertation when registering their Stage II programme in the module registration window.

### Year 2 Semester 2:

Students should start thinking about their topic and a supervisor. Register with supervisor and agree a schedule. Summer Vacation: You may collect data for your project/dissertation.

### Final Year:

Semester 1: Students should meet with supervisor to discuss summer progress and arrange future meetings.

Students admitted with credit to a one-year programme may need to register their dissertation soon after enrolment in semester 1.

Part-time students would normally register not later than two semesters before their expected completion date

By early Semester 2: Students should complete any field work, research and primary analysis. Review progress with supervisor. Check date of final supervision.

Mid Semester: Students should complete the first draft.

By Week 8: Students should complete final revision and print.

Friday of Week 8: Deadline for submission of Projects/Dissertations. Week 13/14: Internal assessment completed and forwarded to External Examiner.

Week 17: SEC approves marks. If the project /dissertation is being assessed in Semester 1 the SEC will be in Week 16.

## Regulations and rationale

To achieve an Honours degree all students who enter stage II of the programme from September 2011 will have to complete 6 'Level 6 Honours' credits. This must include at least one double (30 credit) level 6 honours module, or two 15 credit level 6 honours interdisciplinary project/dissertation modules.

For students on two single subjects registered for a joint award at least seven acceptable module credits including at least two level 6 honours credits must be passed for each Subject.

For those registered for Major/Minor awards at least two level 6 honours credits must be passed in the Major Subject.

Project/dissertation and synoptic modules are level 6 honours modules. Study on these modules should demonstrate that honours students can successfully collect data and select appropriate knowledge from the range that he or she has acquired can propose solutions for appropriate problems and communicate the results, and that the student can work independently.

## Registration

- i. When the student first submits a Stage II programme, a project/dissertation module can be registered along with other Level 6 honours modules. The registration of the project/dissertation title for the appropriate Subject(s) specific module(s) is carried out at the end of the second academic year once the actual topic to be investigated has been identified and a supervisor allocated.
- ii. One year before their final semester, [or for Single Honours and Major Subjects, at a time publicised in the Subject Guide] students will be briefed by the project/dissertation Module Leaders in their subject(s) on the specific subject requirements and supervision arrangements available.
- iii. Subjects will insert their specific arrangements, which should include advice to those students (e.g. those admitted with credit or studying part-time) who may wish to submit their work at the start of semester 1 of the following year rather than semester 2. However, this may have cost implications that need to be considered.

iv. [At a time specified by the subject] the student will negotiate with a supervisor and agree the project/dissertation title/topic and supervision arrangements. The student will draw up an action plan and discuss it with the supervisor.

Where a Subject has a non-standard submission date the Subject Guide should formally specify appropriate dates in the paragraphs above. Special arrangements may then need to be made with Student Central to circulate the lists referred to above at other times.

## Student's responsibility

It is a student's responsibility to ensure that he or she meets the subject rules for the contact with and submission of work to supervisors.

## Supervision and study

i. The project/dissertation module has a module leader(s) who is responsible for ensuring that each student has a supervisor, and for the administration of the module. This is why the registration procedure is important.

ii. "Supervision" is used to cover a number of learning and teaching activities including 1:1 tutorial, small group tutorial, and commentary on drafts. A Subject may decide to institute a cut-off date after which supervision or comment from supervisors is not available. A student may expect a minimum of 4 [or as specified by the Faculty provided it is not less than this] hours supervision per credit for a project/dissertation, some of which may be in small group tutorials. [A Faculty may also specify a maximum entitlement if it believes this can be monitored or enforced.]

iii. Students are encouraged to calculate the time and effort spent on project/dissertation modules on the same basis as all other modules; i.e. approximately 300 hours for double modules.

iv. The following guidelines make clear: The reasonable expectations of students in their work with a supervisor(s) including what happens if a supervisor is absent through sickness or other commitments;

1. Obligations of students;
2. The timetable and milestones for students from registration to submission including, the cut-off point beyond which supervision ceases.
3. Arrangements for supervision of interdisciplinary project/s/dissertations.

[For the interdisciplinary project/dissertations the Module Leaders may decide, in consultation with the student, to assign two supervisors. However, it is not a requirement that interdisciplinary

projects/dissertations should have one supervisor from each contributing discipline and each case should be considered on its merits

If there is a supervisor from each subject, the two Module Leaders will agree for which subject the primary registration will be and thus to which External Examiner it will be sent. If the supervision is expected to be primarily in one subject, the External Examiner will normally be from the same subject.]

Subject specific material should be inserted under these headings.

## Submission

The student must submit his or her completed project/dissertation electronically by 5.00pm on Friday of Week 8 in the semester in which the module is to be assessed.

## 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, please see the [exceptional circumstances webpages](#).

## Assessments requirements, procedures and penalties

The appropriate length or style of a project report or 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. Reports or dissertations exceeding the maximum length will normally be given fewer marks than work of similar quality that is below the maximum length. The length for the report or dissertation should be related to the assessment criteria. The report of this length must include all the necessary evidence and argument.

Additional material may only be submitted in appendices where the Subject Guide gives explicit permission. This would normally only be appropriate for data obtained by students from experiments or interviews, for example. Such data could be submitted in a separate laboratory book or portfolio. Subjects may specify a smaller word count where either a different type of report is required or assessment of something in addition to the report (e.g. an artefact) is specified.

Subjects should indicate clearly in their subject dissertation guides, what the penalties are for work that is in excess of the stipulated limit.

Project/s/Dissertations are normally assessed by two internal examiners. The external examiner for an interdisciplinary project/dissertation is normally the External Examiner for the subject responsible for the administration of the project/dissertation. If another External Examiner is to

be used, he or she should be chosen no later than Week 8 of the semester in which it is submitted. The External Examiner will be supplied with written comments from the internal assessors.

The interdisciplinary paragraph is not normally relevant to Double Subjects.

[Subjects may wish to specify other assessment components such as a viva voce examination or a special exhibition.]

Module leaders need to submit marks via Faculty Grade Entry by the appropriate deadline specified in the UMP Examination Committee Schedule.

A sample of projects/dissertations is sent to External Examiners in Week 12 of the semester in which assessment takes place. This sample will normally include:

- i. all those with a proposed A grade;
- ii. all those with a proposed F grade;
- iii. any for which the internal assessors have not come to a common decision;
- iv. other unusual or problem cases.
- v. others to make at least a 10% sample;
- vi. In addition, all, of the Assessor's Reports for subject-based project/s/dissertations should be available to the External Examiner

Late coursework will receive no marks. This penalty is imposed so that students who submit work on time even though it is not 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 mitigating circumstances for reasons outside their control.

## 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 project/dissertation will be included. In the case of interdisciplinary projects/dissertations, one assessor will normally be drawn from each of the two subjects.

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.

## 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.

## Deletion/withdrawal

Students can only withdraw from the dissertation module in the appropriate module registration window. Once this window has closed it is no longer possible to withdraw from the dissertation/project and the module must remain registered on the student's programme.

## Change of registration

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

## Problems with interdisciplinary projects/dissertations

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 an approved topic, they should consult the Module Leaders immediately, who should resolve the problem as a matter of urgency. In cases of difficulty Student Central should be consulted. SEC must therefore have delegated to the Module Leader responsibility for agreeing modifications to the Subject Requirements for Interdisciplinary project/dissertation in appropriate circumstances.

## Rules for counting

- i. If a double project/dissertation is set wholly within a single subject, both credits will count towards the minimum required for that subject.
  
- ii. For an interdisciplinary project/dissertation one credit will count for each of the subjects for which it is acceptable.

## 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 apprised of any developments or changes of direction whilst they are away.

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