University policy on dissertations in taught postgraduate programmes

Summary			
The policy sets out the generic standard for dissertations in taught postgraduate programmes in terms of its content and format, as well as the procedure for submission.			
Scope - This document applies to:			
The submission of dissertations in taught postgraduate programmes.			
For applicants entering in:	2019/20	Applies to academic year:	2019/20 onwards
Document Control			
Owning team	Academic Quality and Policy Office		
Division	Education Services		
Lead contact	Academic Quality Manager		
Type	Policy	Status	Approved
Asset number	As listed on asset register	Version	3.0
Approved by	University Education Committee	Date current version approved	19.06.2019
Date current version published	06.09.2019	Date first published	01.09.2016
Revision schedule	Annually	Next review date	01.06.2020
Superseded documents	N/A		
Related documents	Regulations and Code of Practice for Taught Programmes		
Keywords	dissertation; submission		

Dissertations in Taught Postgraduate Programmes

A generic standard for dissertations in taught postgraduate programmes is set out below. Any particular requirements must be set out in programme specifications and in guidance from schools.

Schools may adopt their own requirements based on this generic standard, but they will be subject to annual monitoring and progressive harmonisation at Faculty level.

Preparation

Schools will provide students with information to enable them to prepare the dissertation and will advise them of the specific requirements and submission deadlines that apply in relevant handbooks. Students are expected to attend dissertation workshops/seminars, dissertation units and/or specific sessions with their dissertation supervisor. Students should be given access to good examples of Masters dissertations or dissertation templates while preparing the dissertation.

Students must ensure that their dissertation is their own work and must identify any material which is not their own work by referencing and acknowledgement. The dissertation must NOT incorporate dissertation material which has been used for another degree or plagiarise the work of others.

Group projects: For certain programmes, it is possible for collaborative projects and reports to form part of the dissertation. These collaborative projects and reports must however include individual assessment. This must be set out in the unit specification and reiterated by the school at the start of the unit.

Content and format of the dissertation

Word length: The normal requirements for the word length of a dissertation are as follows:

- A maximum word count of between **10,000–15,000 words.**
- A dissertation based on laboratory work may have a maximum word count of between **6,000–10,000** words.

References and lists of contents pages may be additional to the word limit, as can appendices if allowed (although these should be reasonable in length).

If different, the exact requirements for the word length of the dissertation must be specified in the relevant unit specification for the dissertation and communicated to students.

Binding: The dissertation should be presented in a secure, temporary binding, with a glued or spiral spine, e.g. 'perfect binding' and 'spring-back binding'. The University's Print Services (www.bristol.ac.uk/printservices/) can provide this service. Information may be obtained from the relevant School Office.

Sequence: Dissertation material should be organised as follows:

Title Page

Abstract

Dedication and Acknowledgements (if applicable)

Author's Declaration

Table of Contents, Tables and Illustrative Material

Text – chapters, sections and sub-divisions

Appendices – (if any, including media)

List of references/Bibliography

The Title Page, Abstract, Dedication and Acknowledgements (if applicable), Author's Declaration and Table of Contents must be single-sided.

Title page: At the top of the title page, give the title and, if necessary, the sub-title. The full name of the dissertation author should be in the centre of the page. At the bottom centre should be the following words:

"A dissertation submitted to the University of Bristol in accordance with the requirements of the degree of Master of …(title) by advanced study in … (programme title) in the Faculty of…(Faculty name)'.

Under this text, the name of the School and the date that the dissertation was submitted should be provided. The word count must be shown on the title page.

Abstract: Each dissertation copy must include an abstract or summary of the dissertation in not more than 300 words, on one side of A4, which should be single-spaced in font size 10, 11 or 12.

Dedication and acknowledgements are at the discretion of the student.

Author's declaration

I declare that the work in this dissertation was carried out in accordance with the requirements of the University's Regulations and Code of Practice for Taught Programmes and that it has not been submitted for any other academic award. Except where indicated by specific reference in the text, this work is my own work. Work done in collaboration with, or with the assistance of others, is indicated as such. I have identified all material in this dissertation which is not my own work through appropriate referencing and acknowledgement. Where I have quoted or otherwise incorporated material which is the work of others, I have included the source in the references. Any views expressed in the dissertation, other than referenced material, are those of the author.

SIGNED: ……………………………………………………………. DATE: ……………..

(Signature of student)

Table of contents, list of tables and illustrative material: The table of contents must list, in sequence and with page numbers, all chapters, sections and sub-sections, the list of references; as well as abbreviations and appendices (if permitted). The list of tables and illustrations should follow the table of contents, listing with page numbers the tables, photographs, diagrams in the order in which they appear in the text.

Appendices: Not all programmes allow appendices as part of the dissertation. If a programme does not allow appendices, the school will ensure that this information is clearly provided to students in the unit specification for the dissertation.

Referencing: General guidance on referencing standards is provided by Library Services (www.bristol.ac.uk/library/support/findinginfo/literature-references/).

Digital recording media, photocopies and photographs: Appendices may include digital recording media in standard formats and good quality photocopies and photographs as long as such material constitutes the most appropriate method of presenting the

information. This material should be clearly labelled and listed in the dissertation's list of illustrative material. Material must not infringe copyright regulations.

Paper: The dissertation must be printed on A4 (210mm x 297mm) white paper. A3 paper may be used for maps, plans, diagrams and illustrative material. Pages should normally be double-sided (except the preliminary 5 pages which must be single-sided).

Page numbering: Pages should be numbered consecutively at the bottom centre of the page (i.e. the title page is page 1), including appendices.

Text: Text should be in double or 1.5 line spacing; the font size should be chosen to ensure clarity and legibility for the main text and any quotations and footnotes e.g. 12pt. Margins should not be less than 40mm at the left hand (binding) side and not less than 15 mm at the top, bottom and side.

Submission of the dissertation

Schools, with oversight from the faculty, should establish and communicate the form by which its students should submit their dissertation by the required deadline, with the reason for the requirement.

Where a school requires one or more printed copies the cost of printing will be covered by the school, in accordance with the [University's study costs policy](#).

Where a school requires electronic submission, students must submit an electronic copy of their dissertation via Blackboard or via email to the school. Electronic submission of the dissertation enables examiners to check submitted dissertations for plagiarism using plagiarism detection software. One copy will normally be securely stored in the school, in line with data protection guidelines. Students should retain an additional copy of the dissertation in case they are called for an oral examination.

In many schools, the dissertation must be submitted by 12.00 noon on the deadline date. This may, however, vary as the particular details for submission are set by schools using this annex as a guide.

Dissertation submission deadline dates for some part-time and professional programmes may differ from the above deadlines, but they must be clearly stated in school handbooks and enable timely student graduation.

Penalties apply for late submission: see section 17 of the Regulations and Code of Practice. Other than in exceptional circumstances, students must submit their dissertation within the normal study period for the award and in accordance with the programme's requirements and published University deadline dates for submission:

Student mode of attendance	Dissertation submission deadline date	Degree Congregation date (degree conferred if successful)
Full-Time	31 August*	January
Part-time	31 August*	January
Part-time variable	Normally by the maximum study date.	July/January

or next working day if this falls on a weekend or a UK bank holiday

Dissertation examination

Dissertations are assessed by two internal examiners (at least one of whom is not the dissertation supervisor).   The role of the external examiner is outlined in the University's Policy for the External Examining of Taught Programmes (see annex 7). An Examiner's Report Form is used to give feedback on the dissertation and a final mark. Details are contained in school handbooks. Official notification of the examination result is sent to students following the relevant Board of Examiners.