



Bournemouth University  
Business School

# **POSTGRADUATE: Tourism, Hospitality, Events**

## **DISSERTATION HANDBOOK**

**Version 7**

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Due to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic clearly defined operating protocols are in place to support dissertation research. Subsequently the expectation that research will resume as 'normal' (as of 14th September 2020). This means that research activities are expected to resume as 'normal' subject to appropriate adaptations being put in place. Due to physical distancing requirements, it will be important to work closely with your Supervisor to agree how to conduct your research. This situation is of course subject to change and students are advised to consult the [Resuming research activities at Bournemouth University during the COVID-19 pandemic: A guide for Researchers](#) and BU's [Covid 19 general advice pages](#) for the latest guidance.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this handbook is to guide you through your dissertation. Your dissertation is an important element of your Master's degree and we hope that researching and writing it will be an enjoyable part of your studies.

This handbook aims to set out what you can expect in terms of the processes involved in carrying out your dissertation, and importantly what is expected from you in terms of academic and administrative requirements. The dissertation is your opportunity to investigate an area of your own interest, and whilst following clear academic guidelines, it is your chance to undertake study in a topic of your choice. Completing a dissertation requires hard work and determination, but we hope you will find this learning experience rewarding. Although at times the dissertation process can be frustrating, if you choose a topic that interests you and view the work as something that can be useful to your future, the dissertation will develop your skills as a researcher and will allow you to become an expert on a topic of your choice.

Over the years, some of our past students have published elements of their work as reports or articles for academic journals, and have researched many innovative topic areas. This adds to the exciting research community that exists within the Business School. Staff in the school have spent many years on research and this handbook is intended to help you achieve the best results whilst avoiding some of the common difficulties that occur in carrying out research.

The dissertation is an integral part of your Master's degree and as a 60-credit unit, it contributes significantly to the profile of marks which will determine the final class of degree you will be awarded. This handbook provides important information to assist you towards successfully completing the unit. You should take care of these guidelines as you will continually need to refer to them.

**The aim of these guidelines is to help you produce the best dissertation of which you are capable. It contains useful and essential information - it will be of little use however, if you file it away for future reading, or do not keep referring to it. It also sets out our expectations and what you can expect in the way of support from the supervisory system. Additional information is also available on Brightspace in the 'Dissertation' area of your 'programme' tab**

### 1.1 What is a Dissertation?

A dissertation is an extended piece of independent work (maximum 15,000 words), based upon research. It involves the collection, interpretation, analysis and appropriate presentation of data, and the ability to relate the key findings to existing knowledge and understanding within your subject area using a sustained and balanced argument to develop new knowledge. The dissertation will develop your analytical, investigative and problem solving abilities and foster the development of a critical attitude to research methodology, analysis and interpretation of data and an understanding of the ethical issues associated with research. There are a number of past dissertations in your subject area available for you to have a look at in the dissertation archive in the 'Bournemouth University Business School' tab on Brightspace and it is highly recommended that you have a look at some of these as soon as you possibly can.

## **1.2 Learning Outcomes**

Having completed the dissertation, you are expected to be able to:

1. Design, execute and write up an appropriate research project;
2. Evaluate alternative research approaches and select appropriate methods for the research aims; and synthesise ideas and information in order to solve problems or questions that build on existing knowledge;
3. Develop an understanding of the relationship between theory and practice in different contexts;
4. Demonstrate the skills of planning necessary to undertake collection and analysis of information leading to conclusion formulation;
5. Develop research, planning and self-management skills.

**There are three components to the dissertation:**

1. The **proposal form**;
2. An **ethics checklist** submitted on-line and subsequently reviewed by your Dissertation Supervisor;
3. The **dissertation itself** of 15,000 words which will count for 100% of the overall grade.

## **2. ADMINISTRATION OF THE DISSERTATION**

### **2.1 Dissertation Support**

You will be allocated a dissertation supervisor who will provide you with guidance and academic support in the development of your dissertation. You are allocated the equivalent of eight hours over the dissertation stage of the programme. You should consult your supervisor on all aspects relating to your dissertation, on occasion you may however need to make contact with another member of staff (for example, they may have particular expertise in a type of data analysis). If this happens, you must inform your supervisor beforehand and keep them fully informed of any discussions which take place.

### **2.2 Appointments**

You must make an appointment to see your supervisor, you cannot just turn up. Please see email guidelines in appendix two. If you are unable to attend a meeting you are expected to inform your dissertation supervisor as early as possible. Similarly, if your dissertation supervisor is unable to attend a meeting, it is expected that they will inform you as soon as possible and re-arrange the meeting.

### **2.3 Meeting your Supervisor**

Your supervisor's role is to support you and provide guidance, rather than instruct you, so you should not go into a meeting or email your supervisor and expect to be told what to do. You must have an objective for each meeting with your supervisor, for example:

- discussion of the dissertation aim and objectives;
- advice on carrying out research;
- advice on suitability of research instruments e.g. questionnaire/ interview schedule;
- advice on planning/scheduling your work, and setting deadlines;
- debate about theoretical issues;
- offering specific advice on any draft submission chapters;
- areas on which advice should always be sought are your data collection methods and contact with outside bodies and organisations.

Supervisors will normally be supervising a number of dissertation students and it may be that you are sometimes seen in a group with your supervisor, rather than individually. Exact arrangements may differ depending on your supervisor. We strongly advise that you are in regular contact with your supervisor, especially in the early stages of your research. This is to ensure that you are clear about what you are doing and can report on the progress of your research, and that the undertaking of your dissertation is a pleasurable process with a successful outcome.

**Please note that your supervisor may take holiday during your dissertation development period notably during December / January and July/August. Please discuss with your supervisor their holiday plans so that you can work around them.**  
**Spring Break [Easter holiday] is an independent study period for the dissertation and supervisors are not available during this time for consultation.**

<b>2.4 It is YOUR responsibility to make and sustain contact with your supervisor.</b>
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**2.4.1 What you can expect from your supervisor;**

- expertise in supervising dissertations to a successful conclusion,
- timely response to your queries and submissions,
- advice and comments on what you propose to do, including sources which they may be aware of,
- advice and comments on what you have written, including guidance on structure and content.

**2.4.2 You can NOT expect them to;**

- proof read your work for grammar and spelling (please do this once the content of the chapters has been agreed),
- manage the process for you,
- write the work for you,
- instruct you in methods of data collection and analysis because you did not attend the dissertation lectures before you started your research – **if you did not attend, it is your job to catch up yourself on the material that you missed, by using the library and the materials on Brightspace.**

**2.4.3 What your supervisor expects from you;**

- communication in person or via email and/or telephone on a regular basis,
- a firm commitment to achieving the planned timescale,
- that you undertake the necessary research and reading from a variety of sources,
- submission of draft sections or chapters at agreed points and ahead of time to give them a chance to offer you feedback.

<b>2.5 Policy on Reading Draft Work</b>
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Supervisors will read draft sections or chapters in order to comment generally on the nature of the work produced. Supervisors will however, only read and provide detailed feedback on a completed draft section or chapter once. This policy is to ensure that the work produced is an accurate indicator of your ability, rather than a reflection of the gradual upgrading of the work by your supervisor. Whilst, you clearly should not submit draft work to your supervisor too early, neither is it recommended that you wait until the final possible date and hand in a full draft, as it may be more beneficial to get ongoing feedback. Remember that your supervisor will have a number of students to support, it is therefore really important that you keep your supervisor informed of when you intend to hand in draft work.

<b>Any draft section or chapter submitted will only be read and commented on in detail once by your supervisor, so you should ensure that it is of an appropriate level of quality before submission. Your supervisor will only read for content and style, NOT spelling and grammar.</b>
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<b>2.6 Your Dissertation Co-ordinator</b>
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Should you wish to discuss any aspect of the administration of your dissertation, or should you have concerns about the supervision of your dissertation, you should discuss these with your Dissertation Co-ordinator who will help to ensure the smooth running of the dissertation process as a whole.

## 2.7 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ON DISSERTATION SUPERVISORS AND THEIR ROLE

### Q. Where can I look at past dissertations?

A. A selection of past dissertations are available in the dissertation archive on Brightspace. This can be found in the Bournemouth University Business School tab and 'Dissertations' area on Brightspace.

### Q. What will my supervisor do?

A. Your supervisor will help you complete the research by providing guidance on key areas of the research. Your supervisor will tell you if you are on the right track, or if anything is wrong. It is not the supervisor's role, however, to give you a topic to research, the detailed methodology, to interpret the results for you, or to keep in contact with you.

### Q. Can I see my supervisor at any time?

A. You should not simply turn up and expect to be seen - you will need to make an appointment with them in advance. Please check email guidelines in appendix 2 of this handbook.

### Q. What sort of things should I discuss with my supervisor?

A. The function of meetings will differ depending upon the stage that you are at. Do not expect the meeting to consist of your supervisor giving you advice, or telling you what to do, it is up to you to discuss and debate your dissertation with them, and to lead the meetings. You should always have an agenda for your meeting - do not turn up without a clear idea of what you want to discuss.

### Q. Can I bring in draft work to my supervisor to check on the day of my appointment, or should I hand it in prior to the meeting?

A. You only have a limited appointment time, thus you should not expect your supervisor to give you feedback on the spot. You will need to give work to your supervisor in plenty of time (**at least a week's notice to read work**). To do this, you will need to be well prepared.

### Q. Is the supervisor responsible for getting me to complete the dissertation?

A. No. Whilst the supervisor acts as advisor and facilitator, the onus is clearly on you: to be responsible for your own progress; to keep in contact with your supervisor; and to come to an agreement on frequency of attendance. Ideally, you should see your supervisor at regular intervals. Past experience has shown that no or minimal contact correlates with failed dissertation work. Equally, the supervisor does not expect you to be camped on her or his doorstep, nor to do the work for you!

### Q. The skills being tested as part of the dissertation include presentation and communication skills. Will my supervisor check my spelling and grammar in my draft?

A. No. They will not have time to check for spelling or grammatical errors. It is up to you to have this done. You should not rely on spell checkers, as they will not always pick out incorrect usage of words, e.g. there/their so you will need to proof read all work as well.

### Q. Will my supervisor mark individual chapters for me before handing in the final submission?

A. No. Whilst supervisors are prepared to look at drafts once, do not expect any pre-marking, or indication of a likely grade. You should also be aware that even if you have completed a number of individual chapters each of a good standard, that is no guarantee of a good grade - it is how the chapters link together as a holistic piece of work that is important. Thus, you may have a detailed and well-written methodology chapter, but if your chosen methodology is not appropriate to the research objectives developed from your review of literature, for example, then the worth of the chapter is significantly reduced.

### Q. Will my supervisor tell me what to do if I have a problem with my dissertation?

A. Your supervisor will help you solve the problem, but do not expect them to solve the problem for you. Problem solving is part of your work. Your supervisor may suggest materials to read, refer you to someone else who may be able to give advice, or give you some ideas on how to solve the problem.



## 2.8 Guidelines on the Submission of the Final Dissertation

You are required to submit:

An electronic copy of your dissertation (as ONE complete document) via Brightspace by **12.00 noon on the submission date as stated on Brightspace.**

Failure to submit by the required deadline will result in a mark of zero (0%) being recorded.

You may also be requested to submit any additional primary data you have collected, such as completed questionnaires or transcripts/recordings of interviews after the submission date. Failure to submit this data is likely to have serious implications for any mark awarded.

**For the electronic version, please note that the document submitted must include the cover page with the title of the dissertation, the contents page, the abstract, the full dissertation and all appendices. The document should either be in Microsoft Word format (\*.doc) or saved as an RTF file (\*.rtf). Please be aware it is your responsibility to ensure that the electronic version of your dissertation can be read by the University's computer system.**

All dissertations must be handed in by the student concerned or a person authorised by the student concerned (an e-mail must be sent in advance to the PG Administration Office confirming this authorisation and the name of the person being authorised to submit your work).

Late submission will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances and at the discretion of the Programme Leader. Where exceptional circumstances could apply, the University Exceptional Circumstances Procedures procedure should be followed – please speak to your Framework Leader.

## 2.9 Word Count

The **maximum** word count for the dissertation is **15,000 words**. You cannot receive a 10% allowance for the dissertation for any reason, and work of over 15,000 words will be penalised as follows;

·	mark	15,001-16,500 words	– penalty of 10% deducted from the final agreed
·	mark	16,501-18,000 words	– penalty of 20% deducted from the final agreed
·		over 18,000 words	– mark of 0% to be awarded

**Note:** If you are an ALS student, you are advised to liaise with your ALS Support Supervisor to identify and discuss the strategies which you might use in order to meet the word count (as stated in this Handbook) as well as the time and task management strategies which you might adopt in order to meet the overall dissertation deadline.

**The word count runs from the beginning of the introduction to the end of the conclusion. Therefore sections such as the abstract, reference list and appendices do not count. Neither do tables or qualitative data (thus, quotes from respondents reported in the results section do not count). Everything else (including references within the text) is included however. See Section 10 for more information about Word Counts. You must state your word count underneath the abstract in the final submission.**

## 2.10 Student Responsibility

Finally in this section it is worthwhile restating the fact that the dissertation is **your responsibility** from concept to delivery. It is an effective differentiator of your ability to manage yourself, your time and to achieve an appropriate level of knowledge, commensurate with a Masters degree programme. It is also widely recognised by industry to be a discriminator between students applying for employment. Remember that it is your responsibility to make use of the support on offer by the Faculty and to keep in contact with your supervisor. Failure to do so may result in a lower mark for your dissertation.

### **2.11 Additional Dissertation Support**

You can receive Library support in the form of lectures, workshops and one to one appointments. If there is sufficient demand, workshops and / or lectures will be arranged to provide you with knowledge of a variety of resources and equip you with the skills to use them; you will be made aware of times, dates and locations. The Subject Support Team can help you individually or in small groups; you can contact them by following the links in your dissertation unit 'Unit Information and Organisation' and the 'library support' tab to arrange an appointment to discuss your individual research needs and receive advice and guidance on resources that are relevant for your assignments and dissertation topic.

Individual programmes will also offer a series of lectures/seminars and workshops that will provide support on various aspects of the production of a dissertation. These include topic selection and hypothesis/research question development, research methodology and data analysis. You **MUST** attend these lectures if you want to do a good piece of research. Non-attendance may result in a weak dissertation.

### **2.12 Obtaining Feedback on my Dissertation**

Following formal publication of results, feedback on your dissertation will be available from your Programme Administrator who will be able to supply you with a mark sheet which will feature comments collected from both markers and will include an indicative grade against each of the main assessment criteria. They will normally respond to your request within seven working days. Your Dissertation Supervisor and/or Dissertation Co-ordinator are also potentially available to discuss your dissertation with you, although you should be aware that depending on when you make contact with them, their response may take a little longer.

### 3. PLANNING THE DISSERTATION

#### 3.1 Selection of a Suitable Topic

Careful thought should go into the selection of a topic to ensure that it is feasible. Some questions worthy of consideration include the following:

##### 3.1.1 Does it interest me?

Generally speaking, you will be better motivated and enjoy producing a dissertation more if you are interested in the topic. A dissertation is a major commitment of time and energy and you are more likely to succeed - and produce an excellent piece of work - if you are truly interested in the topic. You might want to consider the work already completed at the University to date - practical work, coursework, etc., to identify areas which are of particular interest as this may help in identifying a subject area for your dissertation. Equally you might wish to consider the topics that will be covered in the taught part of the programme, the nature of employment that you may see as a career or areas found to be of interest during your placement (if you choose the placement unit as an option).

*Ask yourself: What interests me? Can I live with it? What have I enjoyed/learned from the classes? Do I have any possible sponsors/opportunities? What do I want to do after I finish the course?*

##### 3.1.2 What information is available?

Try to consider the availability of information on the subject that is selected for investigation. For instance, is there sufficient published information to form the basis of a literature review?

##### 3.1.3 Do I have the appropriate knowledge or expertise?

You should think about any specific requirements in terms of knowledge and expertise, for example you may want to focus on a research question that is psychological in nature. If this is the case, you need to consider whether you have the appropriate knowledge, and how likely it is that you will be able to get up to speed in terms of the discipline.

##### 3.1.4 Will I have access to the required data?

You may be interested in areas such as the strategies being adopted by organisations in the current economic climate, or the leadership styles of CEOs within your industry, however they are unlikely to respond to questionnaires, or have the time to take part in an in-depth interview. You need to think about who you will collect data from, and your access to those sources, and whether they are likely to be able to give you the data that you need.

**Please note, you are not normally permitted to use the University email distribution lists to send out requests for staff or students to respond to your survey or to identify potential interviewees or focus group participants (see 3.1.10). A 'Surveys' distribution list has been set up in Outlook Live for this purpose, please see your Programme Handbook for further details about this facility.**

##### 3.1.5 Health and Safety considerations

Any possible health & safety considerations associated with your research must be discussed with your supervisor. For example, lab based research may involve producing a risk assessment and a COSSH assessment. Health & safety considerations may overlap with ethical considerations – see 3.1.6. If in doubt **ASK** your supervisor. When you submit your final dissertation you will have to include a declaration which states that you met with your supervisor to discuss any health & safety issues which related to your dissertation. It is your responsibility to ensure this discussion takes place with your supervisor and that any outcomes of the discussion, such as the completion of a Risk Assessment form, also duly happens.

### 3.1.6 Ethical considerations

The integrity of any research depends not only on its rigour but also on its ethical adequacy. Ethical issues are many and varied but any research requires a consideration of such issues in order to ensure the protection of the participants, especially if the research involves sensitive or vulnerable groups, such as children, or involves experimental research designs. Therefore, you **will** be required to complete an on-line ethics checklist after discussing these various issues with your supervisor. Supporting information to help you complete the ethics checklist can be found here: [Research ethics](https://ethics.bournemouth.ac.uk). **The checklist itself can be accessed at <https://ethics.bournemouth.ac.uk>.** The checklist will be signed off by your supervisor if they feel that there are no ethical issues, or that you have put sufficient safeguards in place. If there are ethical issues which require further consideration, then your methodology will either have to be approved by the Faculty Ethics Committee or, you will be required to amend your proposed research plan with guidance from your supervisor to meet the Faculty and University's ethical requirements.

One requirement for data collection is that of *informed consent*. Primary research may include any of the following; questionnaires, face to face interviews, focus groups and the direct observation of individuals amongst other methods of data collection. In these circumstances participants should be given information about your study and may, in some circumstances, be asked to sign a consent form. Where participants are asked to complete and return a questionnaire, the questionnaire should be accompanied by or include information regarding the purpose of your study but no consent form typically would be required; with consent being covered in the first question of the questionnaire. There are templates for gaining informed consent on the [research ethics site](https://ethics.bournemouth.ac.uk).

#### What information should be made available to participants?

The following indicates the type of information that **MUST** be given to participants before you start collecting your data:

- Study title and the purpose of the study;
- Who is doing the research and who they are (e.g. student on xxx programme for the purposes of a Masters level dissertation);
- That participation is voluntary, and that they may withdraw at any time;
- What you are expecting them to do – including an indication of the time required;
- Details of the confidentiality of any information collected;
- Contact for further information, (typically both the student and the supervisor);
- Saying thank you for their participation.

This information could be provided in a number of ways. For a questionnaire it could be included in an introductory paragraph, for an interview in the letter inviting a possible respondent to take part in the study or, on a separate piece of paper which could be given to participants before, for example, a focus group.

A second key issue is that of the *confidentiality of the data*. All participants should be informed as to who will have access to your research data. Ideally this should be as few people as possible, and only those who actually need to access the data. A further recommendation is to ensure that individuals cannot be identified in your dissertation; this can be done by using pseudonyms or assigning numbers / letters to individuals in the data set.

There are a range of other ethical issues that you may have to consider and you should make a point of discussing these with your supervisor. As well as submitting the Ethics Checklist through the on-line system, ethical issues **MUST** be discussed with your dissertation supervisor as an on-going process, as your research develops. Gaining ethical approval is not enough in itself, especially if you subsequently amend your methodology. If you do, please consult your supervisor.

#### **IMPORTANT:**

**You should understand that that all research undertaken within the Faculty has to be subject to ethical reflection. You must obtain approval before you collect any primary data.**

### 3.1.7 How much is it likely to cost?

Due to the subject matter and methodology selected, there may be costs incurred for which you are responsible. This could include the cost of undertaking primary research (photocopying, distribution and

collection of questionnaires etc.), the cost of laboratory work (raw materials and equipment where needed) or, even the travelling and subsistence costs incurred in gathering data or interviewing different individuals.

### **3.1.8 How sensitive is the information likely to be?**

Consider the sensitivity of the information to be used. In some instances, if the information is current and obtained directly from a company, there may be some sensitivity about how it is to be used and who will have access to it. This may include financial or personnel related information and data. In such cases you may be required to seek written clearance for the use of the information from the original source.

### **3.1.9 Will it be of any use to me?**

Think about how the dissertation might assist in achieving other objectives, such as applying for a specific job or working in a particular sector of the industry. A well-written and appropriate dissertation is often perceived by employers as an indication of commitment to that job / sector and may help to positively differentiate one student from other, more generalist students. There are many examples of this approach succeeding.

### **3.1.10 Using BU students as participants in my research**

If you would like to collect data from fellow BU students, you should first discuss the content and the design of the data collection instrument with your Dissertation Supervisor. Please note that you should also familiarise yourself with the policies and regulations on using BU online channels for conducting your research. The use of BU e-mail groups for student surveys is governed by IT Services (<http://www.bournemouth.ac.uk/itservices/>) and is generally discouraged. You might however be able to use some of the Brightspace student communities if your participant sample is clearly student-based. Your Supervisor will offer you advice in this regard.

### **3.1.11 Time management**

It is true that lack of dissertation consideration during the taught element of the course may lead to a late start, lack of preparation, rushed delivery and even breach of regulations in late submission. Whilst you are undertaking the taught element of the course you should be thinking about dissertation topics, contacts and sources. Secondly, it is as well to remember that when conducting any fieldwork that you consider appropriate, you will not be a priority for the people who you want information from, therefore plan accordingly in case you cannot get adequate and timely responses.

Here are some survival tips:

- Look at previous dissertations: Go to Brightspace, click on '**Bournemouth University Business School**' tab, then on '**Dissertation archive and research ethics**'.
- Attend lecture programme
- Use your supervisor and friends
- Write drafts
- Start the reference list from day one
- Manage your time
- Take breaks
- Do not plagiarise!

## 4. THE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

### 4.1 Format

You are required to submit a dissertation proposal of 1000 words. This requires you to present your aim and objectives, and your rationale for research, to demonstrate an awareness of the key literature relevant to your study, and to outline and justify your anticipated methodology, including your proposed analysis.

The layout of the proposal can be found in **Appendix 1**, you may complete this form to a maximum of 1000 words or, you may use the headings on the form as a guide to writing your proposal.

The indicative content is as follows:

**1. WORKING TITLE** – ensure that your title is as specific and informative as possible, and accurately reflects what you intend to do. The title may, of course, change as your research develops, so your final submission may well have a different title. The general focus of the dissertation should, however, remain the same

**Once the dissertation proposal has been submitted, you must not significantly change the focus of your dissertation without the approval of your dissertation supervisor.**

### 2. AIM AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

What is the overall aim of your research? Ensure that it is sufficiently focused. What are the objectives, and have you ensured that when achieved, they fulfil your aim? What is the rationale for the study?

### 3. BACKGROUND

In this section, you should briefly summarise the key literature that will inform your study, and identify how your research fits in with the existing state of knowledge or understanding of the topic. You should explain any models or theories that will you draw upon.

### 4. PROPOSED METHODOLOGY

In this section, you should outline the data you need to collect, and how that data is to be collected - be as precise as possible. The key points to think about are

- Will you collect quantitative and/or qualitative data? Justify your choice. Alternatively, will your dissertation be based upon secondary data?
- What method(s) will you use to collect this data? Why you have chosen these methods?
- What sort of questions will you ask? How do these questions relate to the literature?
- Who is your sample, and what is your anticipated sample size? Is the sample sufficient for the proposed analysis?
- How will you choose your sample? What type of sampling technique are you adopting?
- Have you got confirmed access to the sample? If not, do you have any contingency plans?
- How will you analyse the data that you collect?

You should also briefly mention any ethical issues here, which should then be addressed fully in the on-line ethics checklist (see Section 3.1.6).

### 5. REFERENCES (not included in word count) – ensure the work is fully referenced.

Please consult **Appendix 1**, to guide you on the headings required BEFORE you begin writing your proposal.

Your Dissertation Co-ordinator will confirm the date by which the dissertation proposal needs to be submitted. You should be aware that a dissertation supervisor will not be allocated to you until the proposal form has been submitted and accepted by your Dissertation Co-ordinator.

## 5. STRUCTURE OF THE FINAL SUBMISSION

When writing the dissertation it is important to consider the following:

- a) The dissertation should be analytical rather than descriptive;
- b) The dissertation will be assessed as a piece of academic work and not as a business report and therefore the dissertation must follow academic conventions in terms of content and approach.

While it is impossible to be prescriptive, and to offer a series of headings that will apply in all cases, the general structure of the dissertation could be:

1. Title Page
2. Dissertation declaration
3. Abstract (and word count)
4. Acknowledgements (optional)
5. Table of Contents
6. List of Figures
7. Introduction
8. Literature Review
9. Research Methodology
10. Results and Discussion
11. Conclusions and Recommendations
12. References
13. Appendices

While the dissertation follows this sequence, it is often written in a very different order, e.g. the introduction is often the last major section to be completed.

### 1. Title Page

This should follow the format given in Section 8.4. The title of the dissertation is important as it acts as the main signpost for the reader on what to expect and as the main guide for you in terms of information collection and the presentation and content of the dissertation. As a general guide, the title should be as short and specific as possible. A vague title tends to lead to a descriptive dissertation and a difficulty during the data collection and writing stages over what to investigate and where to look for information.

It may be helpful during the planning and writing stages of the dissertation to have a working title which is phrased as a question rather than as a general more abstract statement as this will tend to force you to be analytical rather than descriptive.

### 2. Dissertation Declaration

This should follow the format given in Section 8.6. This form is designed to ensure that permission is granted either for use of the dissertation by other students and researchers for a period of three years or, to ensure that it remains confidential and is not available for such use.

### 3. Abstract (and word count)

This is a summary of about 250-300 words (a maximum of one side of double-spaced A4), which describes the topic under examination and outlines the research aim, objectives and methods of the study. It should also give a brief resume of the main findings, conclusion and recommendations. At the base of this page you are required to give a **word count** of the dissertation, (see Section 2.8 for an outline of what is included in the word count).

### 4. Acknowledgements (optional)

This is your opportunity to express thanks to those who have assisted in the completion of the work, such as your dissertation supervisor, your family and others who may have had an input by, for example, providing specialist support or access to information. Bear in mind that the dissertation is a professional document and that the tone of the acknowledgments must be appropriate for scholarly work.

## 5. Table of Contents

This gives the reader the first view of how the dissertation is structured and how you have attempted to develop the topic. It should list sequentially the chapters and the major sub-divisions of chapters, each identified by a heading and located by a page number. Your precise structure will need to be tailored to the needs of your own dissertation. If in any doubt, discuss with your dissertation supervisor.

## 6. List of Figures

Throughout the dissertation you may want to present material in tabulated or diagrammatic form. Wherever you decide to locate figures in the report, it is conventional to provide a list of figures so that readers can easily find the information.

## 7. Introduction

The introduction should firstly describe the subject under investigation, by clearly outlining the overall aim and objectives of the research. The second element of the introduction is often a context setting section, providing basic details about the context within which the subject is set. It is also useful to explain why it is important that the research is undertaken, either from a practical, industrial, or academic perspective. You may also wish to briefly explain why you selected the topic. Finally, you should also briefly outline the overall structure of your dissertation.

## 8. Literature Review

After an introductory chapter, most dissertations will include a chapter where you draw upon and consider theories, arguments and findings from the literature and which obviously relate in some way to your research question or hypothesis. In this chapter you are “gathering it [the literature] together in a critical review which demonstrates some awareness of the current state of knowledge on the subject, and its limitations...” (Gill and Johnson, 2004, p.22). It should not just be a list of all of the literature you have discovered, rather it should be a critical appraisal of existing work, and you should be explicit as to how your study is related to, or has emerged from this literature. As Veal (2006, p.133) maintains - “a review of the literature should draw *conclusions* and *implications* for the proposed research programme”.

The literature review provides a critical account of previous work in the area. This should include mention of all the literature which you think is relevant to your problem (unless the quantity of literature is truly vast), but it should **not** resemble an annotated bibliography. The reader should be led from your critical remarks to look forward to the advances in knowledge that you will be presenting in the remainder of the dissertation.

Without the firm base provided by a literature review it becomes very difficult to review and evaluate critically your research findings. The literature review sets your work in the context of:

- a specific part of an academic discipline or subject (such as marketing);
- a specific approach to a problem (a type of analysis such as the use of semantic differentials to discover people’s perceptions of, say, different holiday locations);
- commentaries on what has been found out about the general context in which your subject area is set.

Generally a literature review will begin from a broad base of related writings (for example, literature outlining the process and components of marketing) and then narrows down to focus in more detail on the more specifically related writings (for example, the role and nature of customer reservation systems in relation to the company to the distribution component of the marketing mix).

You should not simply write a number of summaries of other people’s work, but identify the general themes, or the differences between writers, in the explanations advanced. Most importantly, make sure that you relate the consideration of themes to what you are doing (state in your text the relevance of the work you are commenting on, or to which you are referring, to your own work). If you cannot state the relevance of an article then perhaps it should not be included.



## 9. Research Methodology

The methodology has two key requirements. The first is to outline how data was gathered in enough detail so that a reader would be able to assess the quality of the data you have collected and replicate your study if necessary. The second is to explain and justify the key methodological choices that you made. The focus, however, should remain on what you have done, rather than what you could have done. Thus, for example, when justifying your data collection method(s), there is no need to outline all of the potential approaches. You will be expected to show that you have read relevant research texts on methodological approaches, that your methodology is informed by your review of the academic literature for the subject and that therefore your selection of methodology is appropriate. Show an awareness of the strengths and limitations of your methodology. You must also acknowledge any ethical issues that you encountered and discussed with your supervisor.

### 10a. Results

Do not simply report every finding here - only those relevant to your study. In terms of the presentation of results, think about how to put your findings over as clearly as possible. You may want to look at some journal articles to see how they have presented their results. You should not present data that does not relate to your research, even if you think it would be interesting.

There is also an expectation that your results will go beyond the purely descriptive. Too many quantitative dissertations only analyse frequency data and percentages. Whilst very simple descriptive analysis can go a long way to meeting some of your research objectives, you should consider more advanced tests such as cross tabulations, t tests and correlations for example. It is important that you only use statistical techniques that are appropriate to your circumstances. There are no marks to be gained from trying to use as many statistical tests as possible and using them inappropriately. In fact the indiscriminate use of statistical techniques which demonstrates little understanding will lose marks.

If qualitative data is collected there is likely to be the widespread use of direct quotes. As with the quantitative analysis you will have to be selective in your use of data in the main body of the text including quotes, although a full transcript of one interview or focus group should be included as an appendix. Again there is an expectation that the results will go beyond the purely descriptive repetition of what the interviewees said. Again some of this information can be summarised in tables. You will be expected to visit the literature on qualitative analysis and to demonstrate and reflect on the process you have followed whilst analysing your qualitative data.

### 10b. Discussion

The discussion is where you should be able to tie the whole study together. In this chapter you should discuss your findings not only in terms of the results themselves, but also how such findings relate to the body of knowledge within your literature review. You should be considering the extent to which your findings support, and where they differ from the literature, discussing reasons why. It is also important to identify how your research adds to the literature. You can also report on the implications of your findings for theory, research, and practice if appropriate.

You may find that your findings are unexpected, or do not support the literature. Rather than assume your data is incorrect, you might want to assess the worth of the literature, for example is it appropriate for your context, or is it outdated? Do the models or theories you have used need to be amended in any way? Alternatively, you may wish to evaluate your data – you might want to assess how effective your methodology has been in gathering valid and reliable data – if there are issues that may have impacted upon this, then you can evaluate these.

It is important within this chapter to focus on discussing what your results mean rather than rehashing what your results are.

### Discussing your Results

1. Summarise your key findings (don't just repeat all of your results)
2. What do those findings mean (a) in terms of your study (b) in terms of wider knowledge and understanding?
3. If the findings support the literature, what does this say about the literature? How does your study add to the literature?
4. If the findings oppose the literature, then why? Is the literature deficient in any way? Does it need amending in light of your study? Was your methodology inappropriate/limited in some way?
5. What has your study added to knowledge and understanding?
6. What are the implications of your findings for theory, research, and practice?

### 11. Conclusions and Recommendations

The conclusion should include a summary of your main arguments, drawing together the various themes and issues so that they can be brought to bear on the defined objectives or subsidiary questions of the study. The original research aim should be revisited at this stage. Your primary research findings should also be set in the context of the literature, so that the reader can see how your findings confirm, contradict or add to the literature.

*Do not underestimate the importance of a well-crafted conclusion.* Your conclusion draws together your findings and the conclusions you have drawn from the information you have collected and presented. The important point is that your conclusions should be made on the basis of what you have presented and not on what you hope(d) might be the case. You should refer back to where in your dissertation the information supporting your conclusion can be found. The conclusions should make clear how you have answered the questions you set yourself and possibly whether or not you can draw any general observations which have wider implications than the specific work you have undertaken.

Similarly, when you include recommendations, the same applies. They should not just be listed but should be explained in terms of the information you have presented. Which sector or sectors can benefit from your findings? What changes might be made as a result of your findings? What new practices can be introduced because of what you have discovered? Or what aspects of good practice should the sector continue with?

It is also important to include a degree of self-criticism in this chapter, indicating what you might do differently if you were to do the research again and also to provide suggestions for further research on your topic.

### 12. References

It is critical that you reference any work that you are citing accurately giving a detailed description of the source from which you obtained the information. You must acknowledge sources and clearly differentiate between ideas or words that are your own and those that originate from others. Ensure you follow the BU guidelines (see further notes in Section 6.2).

From the very early stages, you will need to be organised and keep good track of many different elements of your research. If you follow the simple rules given below, you will avoid hours of checking and chasing at the last minute:

- always keep a record of what you have read;
- always keep a full bibliographical reference, in the correct form, of everything that you read; including the page numbers;
- if you copy a quotation into your notes, do so fully and without abbreviations. Check it thoroughly and remember to include the page number in your notes;
- be particularly careful when you copy statistical tables. Set them out neatly in the notes and check every figure.

### 13. Appendices

You should locate in the appendices information which gives an additional, relevant support to the arguments you are constructing. The appendices are not a dumping ground for material that you couldn't find a place for in the main body. They may contain background information, or detailed statistical and other data that might be important for further reference but is not directly related to the main thrust of the argument. The attention of the reader should be drawn to the content of the appendices at the relevant parts of the dissertation. Statistical and other data of direct relevance to the written text must be included in the main body of the dissertation.

**You should include a copy of your questionnaire/interview schedule or any other data collection protocol within the appendices.**

**You may also want to include an example of a single transcribed interview/focus group if you have carried out either of these methods.**

**You should not include every completed questionnaire or transcribed interview in the appendices however.**

Thus, your Appendices typically might include (depending upon the methodology adopted):

- a copy of the questionnaire or the interview schedule;
- a cover letter to participants;
- survey data results to evidence the data collection;
- samples from the observation log;
- examples of transcripts, analysis techniques or summaries of interviews;
- background company or organisation information, strategic plans, etc.

## 6. WRITING UP THE DISSERTATION

### 6.1 Use of English

You need to ensure that the written style helps rather than hinders the presentation of the material and the understanding of the reader. It is therefore important to bear in mind the following:

- 1 The dissertation should be written in the present tense except for the methodology chapter, which would normally be written in the past tense. If in doubt, discuss with your supervisor.
- 2 The dissertation should normally be written in the third person; however in some qualitative approaches it is acceptable to use the first person. If in doubt, discuss with your supervisor.
- 3 Clichés, colloquialisms, jargon and repetition should be avoided;
- 4 Written English style should be adopted and not conversation style (for example avoid the use of combined words such as 'wouldn't' or 'don't');
- 5 Paragraphs should only contain one idea that is developed. Single sentence paragraphs stating the idea but without amplification of that idea (as in something written in note form) are not normally associated with a good dissertation;
- 6 Incorporate the use of visual signposts to break up the text and to help guide the reader through the text. The most common visual signposts are the use of chapter headings, section headings and sub-section headings;
- 7 Chapters should incorporate both an introduction and a conclusion. The introduction tells the reader what the chapter is about while the conclusion provides a brief summary of the focus and outcome of the chapter and how it leads on to the next;

### 6.2 Referencing

It is essential that you cite publications that you have referred to by giving the author's surname [or organisation name – avoid use of anon.] and the year of publication within the text and that you also list each source in full at the end of the dissertation.

Bournemouth University uses an adapted version of the Harvard style of citation and referencing. If you have a query about citing and referencing in the BU Harvard style you can:

- Go to the 'Referencing and Plagiarism' page of the Brightspace 'Study Skills' tab for guidance. On this tab you can download the Library's 'BU Guide to Citation and Referencing in the Harvard Style' PDF, and, access referencing quick guides and videos.
- Go to the 'Study Skills Workshops' page of the Brightspace 'Study Skills' tab and sign up online to attend a free referencing skills workshop.
- Go to the Brightspace Library tab and ask your referencing query on the instant messaging online chat service.
- arrange a one to one or small group referencing support meeting with a member of the BU Business School Library Support Team.

If you have undertaken extensive background reading which is not cited, a bibliography may be appropriate. However a bibliography should not be included unless this has been agreed with your dissertation supervisor.

### 6.3 Figures

Considerable care and attention is required to ensure a high standard of presentation throughout your dissertation including the proper presentation and labelling of all figures.

Figures (e.g. table, diagram, chart, graph, map, picture, image, illustration, photograph, screenshot etc.) should be numbered consecutively and fully labelled in accordance with the 'BU Guide to Citation and Referencing in the Harvard Style'. You can find referencing guidance on the Brightspace 'Study Skills' tab, download a PDF guide and use this resource: <http://libguides.bournemouth.ac.uk/bu-referencing-harvard-style>

## 7. ACADEMIC OFFENCES

### 7.1 What is an academic offence?

Academic offences are any attempt to gain an unfair advantage in assessed work (including practical assessments) by deception or fraudulent means. You should also be aware that helping another student to commit an academic offence is an academic offence in itself! It is your responsibility to be aware of the University regulations relating to academic offences and to avoid committing them. The BU definitions for academic offences and the penalties for them are listed in: [Academic offences policy and procedures](#)

During Induction you will be given the opportunity to talk about the range of academic offences and the ways in which we detect and investigate them with your Supervisors.

The BU policy and procedure identifies a range of academic offences. Those which have a particular relevance to the dissertation include:

i. Plagiarism: the representation of another person's work as one's own or the use of another person's work without acknowledgement, e.g.:

- submitting whole pieces of work originally produced by another;
- the direct importation into one's work of more than a single phrase from another person's work without the use of quotation marks and identification of the source;
- making a copy of all or part of another person's work and presenting it as one's own by failing to disclose the source;
- making extensive use of another person's work, either by summarising or paraphrasing it merely by changing a few words or altering the order of presentation, without acknowledgement;
- presenting data collected or analysed by others, without acknowledgment;
- presenting artefacts made by others, or derived from the work of others, without acknowledgment;
- the use of the words, constructs or ideas of another person without acknowledgement of the source, or the submission or presentation of work as one's own which is substantially the ideas or intellectual data of another.

ii. Duplication or 'self-plagiarism': normally the inclusion in coursework of any material which is identical or substantially similar to material which you have already submitted for any other individual assessment within the University or elsewhere<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> In instances where an assignment brief or examination question requires the student to use or reflect upon material submitted for a previous assessment on that same programme, the student would not be in breach of the academic offence of 'self-plagiarism'.

NB. Students who are undertaking reassessment or repeating units who utilise previously submitted/aspects of previously submitted work, which was not awarded credit, in order to rectify failure will not be in breach of the academic offence of 'self-plagiarism'.

iii. Collusion: the representation of a piece of unauthorised group work as the work of a single student.

iv. Commissioning (i.e. buying or paying for) another person to complete an assignment which is then submitted as the student's own work, or to extract work from 'essay banks' which is then submitted as the student's own work.

vi. Forgery: the falsification of signature(s) or documents related to certification or assessment.

ix. Bribery: paying or offering inducements to another person to obtain or to attempt to obtain an unfair advantage.

xii. False declarations made in order to receive special consideration by an Assessment Board or to obtain extensions to deadlines or exemption from work.

xiii. Falsification of data: the presentation of any quantitative or qualitative data, based on work purporting to have been carried out by the student, but which have been invented by the student or altered, copied or obtained by unfair means.

xiv. Making use of the assistance of another such as an editor or proof reader, in such a way as to change significantly the content, meaning or significance of what is written.

## **7.2 Plagiarism – what is it?**

Plagiarism means representing someone else's work as your own or using someone else's work without acknowledgement. It is a form of cheating and therefore constitutes a serious breach of University rules. You should be aware that the University has *Turnitin* plagiarism detection software which will be used to help detect possible instances of plagiarism.

Plagiarism is the most common academic offence committed by university students, often by accident because they do not understand how to reference their work properly. You can find out more about plagiarism and how to avoid it on the library and study support tab in Brightspace including the 'How to avoid plagiarism' page as well as the more general 'How to avoid academic offences' pages.

In terms of referencing, Bournemouth University uses an adapted version of the Harvard style of citation and referencing. If you have a query about citing and referencing in the BU Harvard style you can:

- Go to the 'Referencing and Plagiarism' page of the Brightspace 'Study Skills' tab for guidance. On this tab you can download the Library's 'BU Guide to Citation and Referencing in the Harvard Style' PDF, and, access referencing quick guides and videos.
- Go to the 'Study Skills Workshops' page of the Brightspace 'Study Skills' tab and sign up online to attend a free referencing skills workshop.
- Go to the Brightspace Library tab and ask your referencing query on the instant messaging online chat service.
- Arrange a one to one or small group referencing support meeting with a member of the BU Business School Library Support Team.

## **8. GUIDELINES FOR THE PRODUCTION OF THE DISSERTATION**

Presentation forms part of the assessment criteria for the dissertation so please conform to the following guidelines in its production:

### **8.1 Font**

- Normal text to be of 11/12 point
- It is recommended that you use a 'san-serif' font (e.g. Arial or Calibri) for the whole dissertation.

### **8.2 Layout**

- Minimum of 3 centimetres left hand margin (binding margin).
- 2 centimetres top (head) margin.
- 2 centimetres right margin.
- 2 centimetres bottom (tail) margin.
- One and a half (1.5) line spacing.
- Pagination continuous throughout but not inclusive of cover sheet.
- Front cover sheet as laid out in Section 8.4

Please discuss any issues of presentation with your supervisor.

<b>8.3 Title Page Layout</b>
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Top of page:

***('The Title of your Dissertation')***  
**A dissertation submitted by**  
***(your full name)***  
**in partial completion of the award of**  
***(name of degree)***

In the middle of the page:

**'I hereby declare that the dissertation submitted is wholly the work of**  
***(your full name)***  
**Any other contributors or sources have either been referenced**  
**in the prescribed manner or are listed in the acknowledgements**  
**together with the nature and scope of their contribution.'**

In lower half of the page:

**Bournemouth University**  
**Business School**  
***(year of submission)***

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#### **8.4 Dissertation Declaration**

The following declaration should be included in your dissertation, with either Section A (if the dissertation contains no confidential information)  
or, Section B completed (if the dissertation contains confidential information).

##### **SECTION A**

I agree that, should the University wish to retain it for reference purposes, a copy of my dissertation may be held by Bournemouth University normally for a period of three academic years. I understand that once the retention period has expired my dissertation will be destroyed.

##### **Confidentiality**

I confirm that this dissertation does not contain information of a commercial or confidential nature or include personal information other than that which would normally be in the public domain unless the relevant permissions have been obtained. In particular, any information which identifies a particular individual's religious or political beliefs, information relating to their health, ethnicity, criminal history or gender, has been made anonymous, unless permission has been granted for its publication from the person to whom it relates.

##### **Ethical and Health & Safety issues**

I confirm that the on-line ethics checklist was completed and that any ethical considerations associated with the proposed research were discussed with my supervisor and an appropriate research strategy was developed which would take them into account. I also confirm that any potential health & safety risks associated with the proposed research were discussed with my supervisor and where necessary, appropriate precautions were documented, including an appropriate risk assessment.

##### **Copyright**

The copyright for this dissertation remains with me.

##### **Requests for Information**

I agree that this dissertation may be made available as the result of a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act.

Signed:

Name:

Date:

Programme:

## SECTION B

I confirm that this dissertation contains information of a commercial or confidential nature or includes personal information other than that which would normally be in the public domain and that it must not be made available for public access.

### **Ethical and Health & Safety issues**

I confirm that the on-line ethics checklist was completed and that any ethical considerations associated with the proposed research were discussed with my supervisor and an appropriate research strategy was developed which would take them into account. I also confirm that any potential health & safety risks associated with the proposed research were discussed with my supervisor and where necessary, appropriate precautions were documented, including an appropriate risk assessment.

### **Copyright**

The copyright for this dissertation remains with me.

### **Requests for Information**

I agree that this dissertation may be made available as the result of a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act.

Signed:

Name:

Date:

Programme:

## 9. ASSESSMENT OF THE DISSERTATION

### 9.1 Assessment Criteria

In order to pass the dissertation, an assessment mark of not less than 50% must be attained (see Assessment Regulations for details). Two internal examiners will undertake the assessment of the dissertation. Occasionally, a 'viva voce' may be requested by the examiners in order to clarify any issues that may arise during the marking of the dissertation. In addition, external moderation will take place.

The assessment criteria have been developed from a number of sources and are consistent with the University Generic Assessment Criteria. Summary statements are given below.

#### **Distinction (70%+)**

The student distinguishes themselves through their breadth and depth of understanding and through their ability to develop critical insight, to synthesise and apply this to the development of high quality and novel outcomes.

#### **Merit (60-69%)**

The critical distinction between a merit and a distinction is apparent in the breadth and depth of knowledge and understanding of the subject and in the level of critical appraisal and evaluation. The student, although very competent, is not able develop their synthesis of the subject into high quality and novel outcomes to the extent of the Distinction student.

#### **Pass (50-59%)**

The student is generally satisfactory and fulfils the criteria for the award across all important categories. However, their work does not go beyond what is required and demonstrates a lack of depth in understanding, evaluation and practical application.

#### **Fail (below 50%)**

The student has not fulfilled the criteria required to pass. There are weaknesses in important areas. Variations within this mark range will generally relate to the level of understanding, the approach to the question, the factual and conceptual inadequacies, and the relative levels of weakness of the arguments used.

You can use the information on criteria and mark allocation in the figure below to help you evaluate your own work. Make sure you have covered all elements that are expected in a dissertation by evaluating your own draft candidly against the above criteria before submission.

## 9.2 The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business

### **The AACSB Accreditation (and what it means to you)**

AACSB accreditation means we have demonstrated a focus on excellence in all areas, including education, research, developing our programmes and student learning. Pleasingly, we were highly commended for our high levels of student employability, our strong emphasis on experiential learning, and the academically excellent environment we are home to.

What does it mean for you? Well, firstly it means you can be confident that you are receiving an education of the highest quality. It also means anyone looking at employing you in the future will know you have the skills and knowledge needed to succeed in a globally competitive business environment, which will further help your CV stand out from other candidates.

In addition, the accreditation will open up new opportunities for students like you to collaborate with academics and other students from around the world – something we are excited about exploring further to give us an even bigger international impact in the months and years to come.

### **Our Mission:**

We are a globally accredited business school that inspires people and organisations to grow in an empathetic and responsible way through a fusion of outstanding education, research and practice. We make a difference.

### **What is the AACSB?**

AACSB International is a global, non-profit membership organization of educational institutions, businesses, and other entities devoted to the advancement of management education. Established in 1916, AACSB International provides its members with a variety of products and services to assist them with the continuous improvement of their business programs and schools. Here at BU we embarked on a five year journey of continuous improvement aligned with the 15 Standards of the AACSB in order to achieve this prestigious accreditation.

What the accreditation offers:

- Internationally recognised accreditation for undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral programs in business and accounting;
- Publications that provide insight into the business education industry;
- Access to extensive global data and corresponding reports related to business schools;
- Networking through groups and events held both online and in live environments;
- Sponsorships, exhibiting, and business development opportunities.

Assurance of Learning (AOL):

AACSB basis accreditation judgment through 15 standards and a critical area of learning and teaching addresses Curricular Management and Assurance of Learning (AOL). We assess Assurance of Learning through a set of generic Learning Goals (listed below) that are mapped against your programme learning goals. Our graduates possess an array of knowledge, skills, attributes, behaviours and values, which enable them to succeed, but we believe they stand out in four key areas in particular. We express these through our AACSB Assurance of Learning (AOL) Goals and Objectives.

## AOL Goals and Objectives:

Goal 1: Our graduates will be highly competent communicators

Goal 2: Our graduates will be capable, independent researchers

Goal 3: Our graduates will have a critical understanding of responsible business practice

Goal 4: Our graduates will have an in-depth understanding of their subject specialism in a global context

Follow this link for a short video to what gaining AACSB Accreditation will mean to you:

Bournemouth University's journey to AACSB accreditation

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3pVF1rcRdfc>

If you would like to learn more about The AACSB, you can visit their website at <http://www.aacsb.edu/>. Alternatively you can contact our Director of Accreditation, Dr Elvira Bolat at [ebolat@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:ebolat@bournemouth.ac.uk)

## Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies

### The AACSB Assurance of Learning (AOL)

AACSB basis accreditation judgment through 15 standards and a critical area of learning and teaching addresses Curricular Management and Assurance of Learning (AOL). We assess Assurance of Learning through a set of generic Learning Goals (listed below) that are mapped against your programme learning goals.

Our graduates possess an array of knowledge, skills, attributes, behaviours and values, which enable them to succeed and we believe they stand out in four key areas in particular. We express these through our AACSB Assurance of Learning Goals and Objectives.

### For our postgraduate students:

The AOL Goals are listed below, with those assessed in this unit's assessments as indicated:

Goal 1: Our graduates will be highly competent communicators	Assessed
Goal 2: Our graduates will be capable, independent researchers	Assessed
Goal 3: Our graduates will have a critical understanding of responsible business practice	Assessed
Goal 4: Our graduates will have an in-depth understanding of their subject specialism in a global context	Assessed

During your time with us in the BU Business School you will find that a number of your assignments will be assessed using both BU marking criteria and the AOL assessment criteria. The marking scale that we use for AOL is as follows:

BU mark (at Postgraduate Level)	0-49.9%	50-69.9%	70-100%
AOL assessment rating	Does Not Yet Meet Expectations	Meets Expectations	Exceeds Expectations

It is important for you to be aware of the distinction between passing under BU assessment regulation and still 'not yet met' the AOL assessment threshold. If this is the case, you will still be able to progress, as you meet BU assessment requirements. However, you will be able to receive feedback to enable you to benchmark your performance against the AOL goals.

If you have any questions about how AOL has been incorporated into the marking of one of your assignments, please contact the Unit Leader.

**If you would like to learn more about The AACSB, you can visit their website at <http://www.aacsb.edu/>.**

**Alternatively you can contact our Director of Accreditation, Dr Elvira Bolat at [ebolat@bournemouth.ac.uk](mailto:ebolat@bournemouth.ac.uk)**

**PG Dissertation Mark Allocation Scheme**

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<b>CRITERIA</b>	<b>CONTENT</b>	<b>MARK ALLOCATION</b>
<b>INTRODUCTION</b>	Introduction to topic (referenced). Rationale for investigation (context, relevance and significance). A clear statement of realistic aim and objectives. The aims and objectives should establish a clear focus upon which to base investigation. Structure of dissertation briefly outlined.	<b>10</b>
<b>LITERATURE REVIEW</b>	Discussion of the academic (theories and concepts) and practical (industry trends, the business, the environment) contexts, based on relevant contemporary literature. Critical review and synthesis of relevant work in the subject area. Evidence of a broad understanding of current trends. Sufficient range of references used, showing extended reading with emphasis towards the inclusion of contemporary academic journal material.	<b>25</b>
<b>METHODOLOGY</b>	Sophisticated academic explanation and justification of methodology: the overall approach and specific methods such as the data collection and the method of analysis are well justified. Detailed discussion of application of techniques used, and of any limitations encountered. Completed and received approval for on-line Ethics Checklist.	<b>20</b>
<b>MAIN FINDINGS</b>	Discussion of the information obtained and the interpretation/analysis of that information. Use of information (rather than simple presentation) showing selectivity and synthesis. Comparative discussion of own findings with existing research - extent to which findings have been evaluated on the basis of the secondary research/theoretical framework.	<b>25</b>
<b>CONCLUSION</b>	Synthesis and restatement of main themes/findings: conclusions derived from analysis, and the achievement of aim/objectives is discussed. Ideas for future research and policy recommendations, clearly rooted in findings. Concise appraisal of the contribution the research has made to the topic.	<b>10</b>
<b>STRUCTURE and PRESENTATION</b>	Clarity, spelling, grammar, punctuation. Layout, headings, diagrams etc. Content of bibliography. Correct referencing in text to adequate number of texts from bibliography.	<b>10</b>
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>100</b>

## 10. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT THE DISSERTATION

**Q. Where do the Aim and Objectives go?**

A. *It is often a good idea to present your aim and objectives as soon as you can within the dissertation, so we would recommend you outline them in the introduction. It is also a good idea to repeat them at the beginning of the methodology as well.*

**Q. Do I have to have a hypothesis?**

A. *No – not all research requires a hypothesis. Hypotheses are more generally associated with quantitative studies that build upon a strong body of existing knowledge that allows predictions to be made about the outcome of any study. Obviously this is not the case with all research, and is something that you should discuss with your supervisor.*

**Q. What is counted within the word count?**

A. *The word count runs from the beginning of the introduction to the end of the conclusion. Therefore sections such as the abstract, references list and appendices do not count, neither do tables, figures, or qualitative data (thus, quotes from respondents reported in the results section do not count). Everything else is included however. You must state your word count underneath the abstract in the final submission.*

**Q. And, do References within the text count in the Word Count?**

A. *References within the text do count, for example “as previously argued (Smith 1999)” would count as five words, however your References List does not count.*

**Q. How long should each chapter be?**

A. *There is no clear answer to this as the number of words in each Chapter of your dissertation is not fixed and it will depend upon a number of factors, for example the nature of the study, the range of available literature, the chosen methodology and how you approach your data analysis. If you are undertaking a quantitative approach using a single questionnaire, for example, then you might find that your methodology is much shorter than that of a fellow student who is combining qualitative and quantitative methods. Those taking a more inductive approach may have a comparatively short literature review, but a longer discussion. If in doubt, discuss this with your dissertation supervisor.*

**Q. Can I combine my Results and Discussion Chapters?**

A. *Yes, if appropriate. This is often done for qualitative studies, but not normally in quantitative studies. If you think it would be appropriate, discuss this with your supervisor.*

**Q. I have always been told to write in the third person, yet in some of the published work I read, the author often uses the terms ‘I’, ‘We’ and so on – would this be acceptable for my dissertation?**

A. *Depending on your approach, the use of the first person may be acceptable – for some qualitative approaches the use of the first person is gaining increased acceptance, and if you feel your approach merits this, then you should discuss this with your dissertation supervisor.*



**Q. How many references should I have?**

A. *There is no set answer to this question – you should ensure that you have covered the literature in sufficient depth using appropriate sources (for example you will use predominantly journal articles, with less reliance upon textbooks).*

**Q. Do I need to put all of my questionnaires/interview transcripts in the appendices?**

A. *No – you should include a blank copy of your questionnaire or interview schedule in the appendices. You may also want to include one interview transcript. You do, however, need to keep all completed questionnaires/transcripts, however, as we may ask to see them*

**Q. How many interviews should I do?**

A. *There is no set number – one approach is to undertake interviews for as long as you are learning new information. Once you find you are not gaining anything new from the data, you should not need to undertake any more interviews. The actual number undertaken will be dependant on a range of factors. But, as an indication, 6-8 detailed interviews would normally be appropriate, whereas shorter interviews may require 10-12 respondents. You should discuss and agree the number of respondents required with your supervisor.*

**Q. How many questionnaires should I do?**

A. *There is no set number – the number you do will depend upon the nature of your research and whether any other methodologies are being undertaken as well. The number will also depend on the population size, length of the questionnaire itself, the level of variability anticipated in the responses, the proportion of closed v. open questions within it and the level of analysis you plan to undertake. As an indication however, 100-120 respondents would be fairly typical of the minimum level required. You should discuss and agree the number of respondents required with your supervisor.*

## 11. CHECKLIST FOR USE BEFORE SUBMISSION

### **About your dissertation**

- Does the title clearly indicate the nature of the study?
- Does your abstract give the reader a clear idea of what is in the document? Have you ensured that it gives precise detail about the findings?
- Is your table of contents well-structured and does it give a picture of what's included?

### **Focus and justification**

- Have you introduced your dissertation adequately to set the scene?
- Have you a clear focus? Is your dissertation tightly defined and contained? As such, how detailed and comprehensive is your dissertation, or does it lack depth?
- Have you got a clearly constructed and suitable aim which leads to a set of clear and related subsidiary objectives?
- What is the rationale behind your dissertation? Why is it important that the research has been undertaken? To whom?
- Why should the reader read your piece of work? Is it saying something worthwhile?

### **Literature**

- Have you managed to identify and access the work of key writers in your particular area?
- Is your issue or focus underpinned by theory?
- Have you used a variety of sources or are you over reliant upon a certain author(s)?
- In your literature chapters do you merely identify and describe, with no real critical edge?
- Have you identified how your dissertation relates to what has been done before?
- How up-to-date are your references?

### **Methodology**

- Have you explained the rationale behind your chosen means of collecting information?
- Are your research methods the most appropriate given your aim and objectives?
- If you didn't use primary data collection methods, how substantial is your analysis of secondary data? Is it more than just a review of existing literature?
- Are you making assumptions? You know what you did in terms of research methods - have you expressed yourself clearly and given adequate details? Would someone else be able to replicate your study on the basis of the information you've given?
- Have you commented on any ethical considerations emerging from your chosen methodology?
- Was your data-collection well-planned and conducted satisfactorily?
- Any limitations? Anything you might have done differently?

### **Findings and discussion**

- Are your findings clearly presented?
- How have you analysed your findings? Appropriately?
- Are your methods of analysis sound and appropriate?
- Do you analyse and interpret your data or merely describe? Are you critical?
- Do you spend adequate time discussing your findings?
- In the discussion, do you adequately re-visit the literature and relate your findings to the literature?
- Are your arguments coherent, logical and sound?

### **Conclusions and recommendations**

- Do you return to your research aim and objectives?
- In evaluating your own progress and dissertation outcomes, what limitations would you identify?
- Are the recommendations you make, feasible and practical?

***General presentation***

- Is your content well-planned, and logically structured?
- Is the work well-presented?
- Have you obviously left things to the last minute, thus rushing or omitting important elements?
- Have you exceeded the word limit?
- Have you made appropriate use of supportive materials to enhance presentation i.e. graphs, tables, illustrations?
- Have you conducted a thorough read through, to eliminate careless spelling and typos, poor grammar, and poor sentence construction?
- Are you writing in the most appropriate tense? Is your writing too informal?
- How well do you communicate your ideas? Does what you write make sense?
- Do you link your various chapters and make use of sign-posting to help the reader? Do you set out your intentions clearly in your introduction?
- Have you set out your references with the required detail and in the recommended format?
- Have you acknowledged all sources used, and made it clear when it's your views that are being expressed, or the views of others?
- Have you made appropriate use of appendices? Are there any unnecessary appendices?

## 12. SOME USEFUL TEXTS ON PREPARING YOUR DISSERTATION

### GENERAL

*These books are good across a variety of topics. All are available online via the 'reading list' link from the unit in Brightspace.*

Bell, J., 2018. Doing Your Research Project. 7th ed. Buckingham: Open University Press.

Cottrell, S., 2014. Dissertations and project reports: a step by step guide. Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan.

Denscombe, M., 2014. The good research guide: for small-scale social research projects. Maidenhead: Open University Press.

Durbarray, R., 2018. Research methods for tourism students. London: Routledge.

Fox, D., Gouthro, M. B., Morakabati, Y., Brackstone, J., 2014. Doing Events Research: From Theory to Practice. London: Routledge.

Kolb, B., 2018. Marketing research for the tourism, hospitality and events industries. London: Routledge.

Long, J.A., 2007. Researching leisure, sport and tourism: the essential guide. London: Sage.

Mason, P., 2014. Researching tourism, leisure and hospitality for your dissertation. Oxford: Goodfellow.

O'Donoghue, P., Holmes, L., Robinson, G., 2018. Doing a research project in sport performance analysis. London: Routledge.

Patten, M.L., Newhart, M., 2018. Understanding research methods: an overview of the essentials. London: Routledge.

Smith, M. F., 2010. Research methods in sport. Exeter: Learning Matters.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A., 2019. Research methods for business students. 8th ed. Harlow: Pearson.

Veal, A.J. & Burton, C., 2014. Research methods for arts and event management. Harlow: Pearson.

### *Useful books but not online*

Bryman, A., 2015. Social Research Methods. 5th ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Flick, U., 2018. An Introduction to Qualitative Research. 6th ed. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Bell, J., 2018. Doing Your Research Project. 7th ed. Buckingham: Open University Press. (chapter 6 & 7)

Fox, D., Gouthro, M. B., Morakabati, Y., Brackstone, J., 2014. Doing Events Research: From Theory to Practice. London: Routledge. (chapter 6)

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A., 2019. Research methods for business students. 8th ed. Harlow: Pearson. (Chapter 3)

### Secondary data

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A., 2019. Research methods for business students. 8th ed. Harlow: Pearson. (Chapter 8)

### RESEARCH APPROACH

Durbarray, R., 2018. Research methods for tourism students. London: Routledge. (Chapter 7).

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A., 2019. Research methods for business students. 8th ed. Harlow: Pearson. (Chapter 4 & 5)

## RESEARCH METHODS

*Most of the books listed under general will cover research methods.*

### Interviews

Bell, J., 2018. Doing Your Research Project. 7th ed. Buckingham: Open University Press. (Chapter 11)

Hammersley, M., 2013. What is qualitative research? London: Bloomsbury. (Chapter 3)

Long, J.A., 2007. Researching leisure, sport and tourism: the essential guide. London: Sage. (chapter 7)

Merriam, S.B. & Tisdell, E., J., 2016. Qualitative research: a guide to design and implementation. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (Chapter 5)

Rubin, H.J. and Rubin, I.S. 2004. Qualitative interviewing : the art of hearing data. London: Sage. (Chapter 6, 7, 8, 9)

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A., 2019. Research methods for business students. 8th ed. Harlow: Pearson. (chapter 10)

### Focus groups

Barbour, R., S., 2007. Doing focus groups. London: Sage

Litosseliti, L., 2003. Using focus groups in research. London: Continuum.

### Observations

Bell, J., 2018. Doing Your Research Project. 7th ed. Buckingham: Open University Press. (Chapter 13)

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A., 2019. Research methods for business students. 8th ed. Harlow: Pearson. (Chapter 9)

### Netnography

Durberry, R., 2018. Research methods for tourism students. London: Routledge. (Chapter 11).

Merriam, S.B. & Tisdell, E., J., 2016. Qualitative research: a guide to design and implementation. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (Chapter 7)

### Questionnaire design

Bell, J., 2018. Doing Your Research Project. 7th ed. Buckingham: Open University Press. (Chapter 10)

Fox, D, Gouthro, M. B., Morakabati, Y., Brackstone, J., 2014. Doing Events Research: From Theory to Practice. London: Routledge. (Chapter 9)

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A., 2019. Research methods for business students. 8th ed. Harlow: Pearson. (Chapter 11)

## SAMPLING

### Sampling quantitative

Long, J.A., 2007. Researching leisure, sport and tourism: the essential guide. London: Sage. (Chapter 4)

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A., 2019. Research methods for business students. 8th ed. Harlow: Pearson. (Chapter 7)

Veal, A.J. & Burton, C., 2014. Research methods for arts and event management. Harlow: Pearson. (Chapter 13)

### **Sampling qualitative**

Merriam, S.B. & Tisdell, E., J., 2016. Qualitative research: a guide to design and implementation. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (Chapter 4)

Rubin, H.J. and Rubin, I.S. 2004. Qualitative interviewing: the art of hearing data. London: Sage. (Chapter 4)

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

### **Qualitative analysis**

Fox, D, Gouthro, M. B., Morakabati, Y., Brackstone, J., 2014. Doing Events Research: From Theory to Practice. London: Routledge. (Chapter 11)

Merriam, S.B. & Tisdell, E., J., 2016. Qualitative research: a guide to design and implementation. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (Chapter 8)

### **Quantitative data analysis**

Fox, D., Gouthro, M., Morakabati, Y. and Brackstone, J., 2014. Doing events research: from theory to practice. Abingdon: Routledge. (Chapter 12)

Rubin, H.J. and Rubin, I.S. 2004. Qualitative interviewing : the art of hearing data. London: Sage. (Chapter 11 & 12)

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A., 2019. Research methods for business students. 8th ed. Harlow: Pearson. (Chapter 12)

Veal, A.J. & Burton, C., 2014. Research methods for arts and event management. Harlow: Pearson. (Chapter 16)

### **Quantitative analysis using SPSS**

Aljandali, A., 2016 Quantitative analysis and IBM® SPSS® statistics: a guide for business and finance. Switzerland: Springer (Note the instructions refer to an older version of SPSS)

### *Useful but not online*

Field, A.P., 2018. Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics, 5<sup>th</sup> edition. Sage, Los Angeles.

## **WRITING UP**

*Note that lots of the research methods text books will have a chapter on presenting research. Make sure you distinguish between presenting qualitative and quantitative research as different strategies are used.*

### **Qualitative**

Merriam, S.B. & Tisdell, E., J., 2016. Qualitative research: a guide to design and implementation. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. (Chapter 10)

### **Quantitative**

Saunders, M., Lewis, P. and Thornhill, A., 2019. Research methods for business students. 8th ed. Harlow: Pearson. (chapter 14)

**APPENDIX 1 – POSTGRADUATE DISSERTATION PROPOSAL FORM**

**Student Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Programme:** \_\_\_\_\_

**PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM PROMPTLY AND AS FULLY AS YOU ARE ABLE**

This form is used by your Dissertation Co-ordinator to allocate you an academic member of staff from within the Faculty who will be able to guide you during the production of your dissertation. Your Dissertation Co-ordinator will respond to any general questions you raise prior to your dissertation supervisor allocation, so please make it clear if you have questions or concerns that you wish him/her to either take account of in allocating a supervisor or to respond to.

**A1 - INDICATION OF POSSIBLE TITLE**

Ensure that your intended title is as specific as possible and accurately reflects what you intend to do. The title may of course change as your dissertation develops, so your final submission may well end up with a revised title to this.

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**A2 - POTENTIAL AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

State the overall aim of your research ensuring that it is sufficiently focused and list the research objectives that you consider you will have to set in order to meet this aim (normally 4-6 in total).

**AIM:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**OBJECTIVES:**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**A3 - POTENTIAL METHODOLOGY**

Outline the data you need to collect and how it is to be collected as precisely as possible, including: What methods you will use to collect this data and why have you chosen them? What sort of questions you will ask? Who you will ask - how many and how they will be chosen? How will you analyse the data?

\_\_\_\_\_  
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**A5 - Have you spoken to any members of staff about your ideas – if so, who?**

**Signed (Student):** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Please follow the instructions on Brightspace to submit these two pages to your Dissertation Coordinator by the stated date and also bring them along to your first meeting with your allocated Dissertation Supervisor.**





### Email and Communication Guidelines

Please adhere to these guidelines when emailing staff; these also apply to emails from staff:

- You must only use your official BU email account to communicate, because:

1. General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR). University emails are registered to individual staff (and students), which makes communication on personal matters easier. Private email accounts can be set up by anyone and the addresses, therefore, does not actively identify the sender.

2. Emails from private accounts can sometimes be filtered to the 'Junk' folder and might not be seen by the recipient.

- When writing an email you should write in a manner that would be considered good business practice, and consistent with the highest professional standards.

- Please remember that the email system is not an instant messenger app; therefore you should receive a reply within the time limit applicable for formal communications. This is specified as three working days. In practice you will probably receive a response much sooner, during the working week. The recipient of your email may choose to respond outside of the normal working week (evenings and weekends), but this should not be the expected norm. Everyone has a right to rest periods, to recuperate and prepare for the following day/ week.

- Should you not receive a response to your email within the specified time limit, you should email the recipient again with a polite reminder. If you receive an 'out of office' response this will normally specify who you can contact in the absence of the recipient. Please don't send follow-up emails until the (three working day) time limit has elapsed.

If the matter is urgent and within normal working hours you should seek personal support from your Programme Support Officer, Level Tutor or Programme Leader. If outside normal working hours and the matter is an emergency you should seek support from the University on-call structure (dial 222 if on campus or 01202 962222 if off campus); in a medical or police emergency dial 999.



## PG Dissertation Marking Sheet

<b>Programme:</b>
<b>Student Name:</b>
<b>Dissertation Title:</b>

	Mark each section out of 100	Weighting	Mark (%)
Introduction, incl. aim, objectives and rationale		0.10	
Review of the associated literature		0.25	
Research methodology: data collection and analysis; sampling; ethical considerations		0.20	
Critical analysis of the data (discussion)		0.25	
Conclusions drawn		0.10	
Structure and presentation of the dissertation		0.10	

<b>Overall comments of the First / Second Marker</b> <i>(include bullet points of advice on areas where improvement is needed on failed submission)</i>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> marker:</b> .....	
	<b>2<sup>nd</sup> marker:</b> .....	
	<b>FINAL AGREED MARK:</b>	