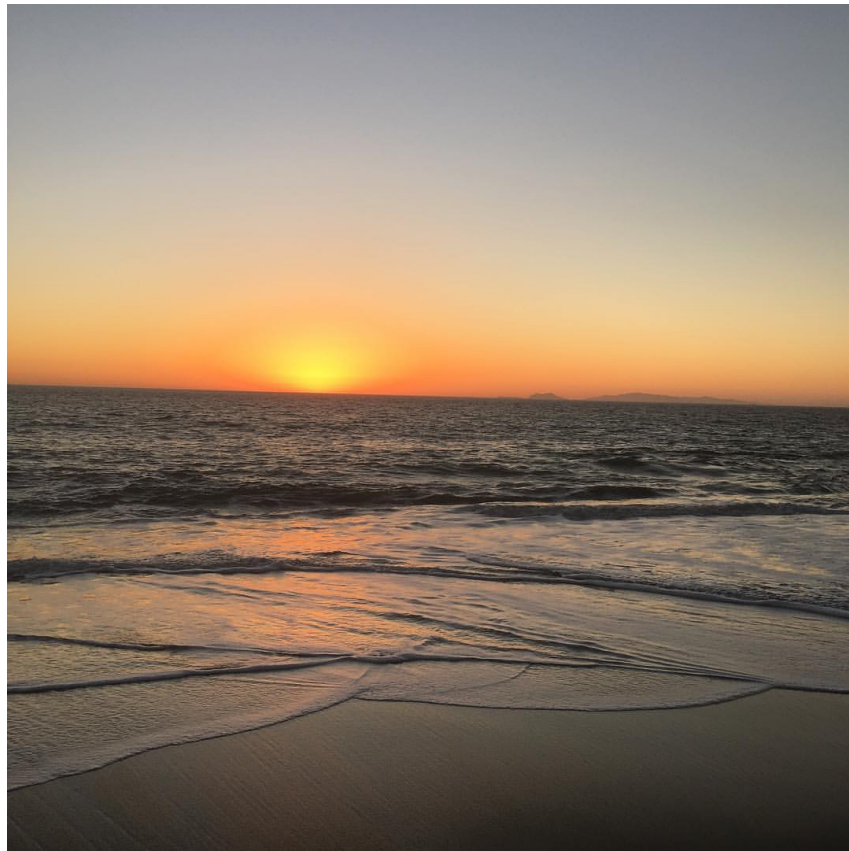


Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis Masters Dissertation Handbookⁱ

2018/19



Thanks to UCL Digital Humanities for publishing their MSc Dissertation handbook upon which sections of this guide have been based and others adopted.ⁱ

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1 Requirements of the Dissertation

1.1 Aims

All Masters students are required to submit a dissertation as a major element of the work that they do towards their degree. The dissertation should present the findings of a programme of original research, the topic of which is chosen by the student in consultation with members of the academic staff in CASA.

It is your opportunity to demonstrate the ability to formulate and investigate a question of relevance to your programme of study, and to analyse and present the findings of that investigation as an original piece of writing. It is a chance to pursue research themes that you have yourself chosen and find particularly interesting. It is also a chance to put into practice the skills that you have learned or refined through work for the taught course elements of your Masters degree.

1.2 MRes and MSc

The MRes and MSc share common approaches to research, and a common set of goals in their assessment framework. There is a separate MRes section to this document which describes some of the differences.

1.3 Scale of the work

The dissertation accounts for 60 (MSc) or 90 credits (MRes) from the total of 180 which make up the Masters as a whole.

The dissertation should normally be of **10,000-12,000 words (MSc)** or **10,000 + 5000 words (MRes)**, excluding figures, bibliography, footnotes and appendices. The maximum word limit should not be exceeded. In some instances, particularly those research projects which are largely computer based, rather less supporting text may be required. However, you should offer some justification for any departure from the normal format and this should be discussed with your course director and supervisor well in advance of the submission date.

1.4 Word Count Penalties

Penalties will be applied to overlength dissertations:

Dissertation Length	MSc	MRes
Less than 10,000 words	No penalty	No Penalty
10,000-12,000 words	No penalty	No Penalty
More than 12,000 words	10% Penalty	10% Penalty

Similar penalties apply to the MRes *publication*:

Publication Length	MRes
Less than 5,000 words	No Penalty
5,000-6,000 words	No Penalty
More than 6,000 words	10% Penalty

1.5 Topic

The topic is entirely up to you, but is likely to be related to the various material introduced during the rest of the course. If you are already professionally employed part-time, or are planning to take up professional employment in the summer, you may wish to propose a

topic connected with your place of work, although this must be done with the knowledge and consent of your employer.

There are a number of ways in which you can define your dissertation topic:

- following up on a topic or issue raised in your taught classes, or arising out of the literature you have consulted
- developing an aspect of your coursework which warrants further investigation
- inspired by a particular data set you have encountered
- focusing on an area in which you would like to seek employment, in order to acquire greater understanding
- project offered by an external partner
- discussion with tutors, fellow students and professionals.

You may find it helpful to look at the titles of dissertations produced by students in previous years. These are available in CASA in printed form. However, you should bear in mind that the kind of topics accepted in earlier years may not always be acceptable now. Your choice of topic will be subject to the agreement of your Course Director and potential supervisor, and you are advised not to begin work on the dissertation until the topic has been agreed. We reserve the right to reject or amend your proposal, subject to discussion with you. In any case, the proposal should be seen as a working document which may change as your work progresses.

1.6 Proposal

You will complete a draft dissertation proposal document and submit to your course director by the end of the Term 2 reading week (usually towards the end of February).

Your draft proposal document will include the following:

- **Provisional dissertation title**
- **Details of any collaboration with an outside body**
- **Proposed research topic**
- **Overarching aims of the Dissertation**
- **Outline Methodology**
- **Sources of data you intend you use**
- **Sort term action plan**

1.7 Supervision

It is important that there is effective communication between student and supervisor, both initially, in the definition of the topic and the method of approach, and subsequently, in the provision of continuing guidance and the monitoring of progress.

You will be allocated a supervisor during Term Two. After having clarified the topic and methodology, students are expected to see their supervisors on five occasions before the date of submission. The onus is on the student to make this contact, and if necessary it may be electronic rather than in person, provided both parties agree to such an arrangement. All students should submit at least one piece of written material for comment by their supervisor, well in advance of the submission date – this is likely to be an initial literature review

1.8 Submission

All dissertations must be submitted by 5pm on Friday 30th August. There is no possibility of an extension except under special circumstances (e.g. on medical grounds). Accompanying documentation will be required, and an extension may be granted for 12 months, so any candidates who do obtain an extension will not graduate for 12 months after their peers. If personal circumstances necessitate an interruption of study, an application should be made through the supervisor in advance of the submission date.

All dissertations will be submitted via Turnitin. Make sure you read the UCL documentation for using Turnitin.

1.9 Lateness Penalties

Dissertations are subject to the same lateness penalties as other submissions.

Lateness	Penalty
Before or at deadline	No penalty
1 second – 2 working days late	10% penalty
2 – 5 working days late	Mark capped at pass (50%)
Over one week late	Fail (0%)

In the case of coursework that is submitted over- or under-length and is also late, the greater of any penalties will apply.

For regulations regarding the presentation and format of dissertations, see below.

1.10 Assessment

A mark scheme (similar to those published for the assessment for individual modules) will be published on Moodle.

All Master's dissertations are marked by two internal examiners and a selection is marked by one of the External Examiners.

1.11 Ethical and Risk considerations

Any research at UCL that makes use of living human participants, or the collection and/or study of data derived from living human participants requires approval from the [UCL Research Ethics Committee](#) or the **National Research Ethics Service**, unless it falls into one of their exemption categories

If you are planning to record information that would allow your research subjects to be identified, then you will need to inform the UCL [Data Protection](#) Officer of your plans.

All **MRes** dissertations require a clear statement of ethics; please see the MRes section for more information.

1.11.1 Research Requiring UCL Research Ethics Committee Approval

Formal approval must be sought of the [UCL Research Ethics Committee](#) if your research involves:

- Deception or covert collection of data
- Children (any person below the age of 18)
- Vulnerable participants, including prisoners and people suffering from mental illness, or those not deemed able to provide active consent
- Other living participants or data collected from such, which do not fall into the exemption categories listed below.

You do not need to apply for research permission if you are undertaking:

- Research involving collection or study of existing, publicly available data
- Research involving anonymised records and datasets in the public domain
- Research involving the use of educational tests, surveys, interviews or observations of public behaviour UNLESS the information is recorded so as human participants can be identified, AND disclosure of the participants' responses could place them at risk of criminal or civil liability, or damage their financial standing, employability or reputation.
- Similar research not so exempt, but where the participants are elected or appointed public officials or candidates for public office.
- Service evaluation or audit; participants would normally be those who use or deliver this service, and the process would not change the actual service being delivered. This data could also be used for subsequent research providing the data is anonymous, no participants can be identified from the resulting report, and use of the data will not cause substantial damage or distress.

AND your research does not fall into the categories requiring formal approval listed above.

1.11.2 Research Requiring National Research Ethics Service Approval

You **must** apply to the National Research Ethics Service for research permission if:

- Your research involves patients or service users of NHS healthcare
- Your research involves collecting data from any users of this service, or access to confidential information of patients by researchers outside the normal care team without the patients consent
- Your research uses previously collected data from which a past/present user of these services could be identified
- Your research involves individuals over the age of 16 who are unable to give informed consent to take part in the research
- Your research involves human tissue from the living or deceased

You do **not** need to apply for research permission if:

- You have obtained the patient or user's informed consent to having their data collected by you, and they are considered able to give that consent
- You are using previously collected data that has been made anonymous and from which a past or present user of NHS healthcare cannot be identified

Further information on how to apply for this approval is available from the [UCL Research Ethics Committee website»](#)

1.11.3 Data Protection

The [Data Protection Act 1998](#) states that if you collect personal data about identifiable individuals you must only collect the data your research requires, keep this data secure at all times, and only hold onto this data as long as it is needed for your stated purpose.

If you do not make your research subjects anonymous, and have collected personal data about them, then you must register your research with the UCL Data Protection Officer.

- To do this, go to the [UCL Legal Services website](#) and download their 'Form 2: Research registration'. Complete this online and email it to: [data-](#)

protection@ucl.ac.uk. This should take around 5 days to process. Registration should take place **before** you commence collecting your data.

Data Protection does not become an issue if you choose to anonymise your data, ensuring that you do not keep personal details about your research subjects and so cannot link individuals to your research data or results. This is generally considered good practice when working with human participants, as it minimises the risk of harm, should their responses or involvement with your work become known. However, anonymisation may not always be practical or desirable within the framework of your particular research.

1.11.4 Risk Assessment

You may also have to submit a Risk Assessment Form if your research is likely to have any associated health and safety issues. Examples where this might be required could include primary collection of data in locations that could be dangerous, conducting your research abroad, conducting interviews in private residences, or collecting data in any other dangerous circumstances or environments. A range of risk assessment forms for different circumstances can be found on the [UCL Risk Assessment website](#).

1.12 Copyright and publication

Exceptionally good dissertations often constitute a contribution to professional and academic knowledge, and as such may be published in a relevant journal. CASA wholeheartedly supports this and your tutors will be happy to advise on this. The copyright of the work belongs to the student. However, students are advised that they must acknowledge that the work was originally written as part of a UCL Master's degree.

We hold printed copies of your dissertation after submission, and may share these with students or prospective students – if you would prefer us not to (e.g. for reasons of commercial sensitivity) please let us know.

2 General Advice

2.1 Goals

Throughout your research and writing up, it is important to keep in mind the ultimate goal of the project, i.e. the completed dissertation. It is easy to become diverted, disheartened or disorientated: stick closely to the agreed outline and submission deadline, and try to remain positive ('I can do it!').

Within the overall completion timetable, work to a series of smaller targets agreed with your supervisor. It helps to break up the project into manageable tasks, and to stick to your deadlines. Allow plenty of time for proof-reading, checking footnotes, and formatting your final version. Careful planning is vital to producing results.

2.2 Planning

From the beginning of your research, it is important to agree an appropriate framework for study.

Timetable

Task	Deadline	Requirement
Submission of dissertation draft proposal form	End of reading week (wk 25)	Fill out proposal form (download from Moodle) and email to course director
Allocation of Dissertation supervisor	Beginning of March	Students informed by email
Initial meeting with supervisor (+ allocation of 2 nd supervisor for MRes)	March	
Literature Review outline (annotated bibliography) (MRes students)	End of March	
Submission of Literature Review	Mid-May (MRes) Beginning of June (MSc)	*1,500 – 2000 words submitted to your dissertation tutor *this may not be a requirement enforced by your dissertation tutor – will vary depending on project and tutor
Final Dissertation submission	30 th August	Completed thesis

2.3 Literature Review

Before commencing your research, it is essential to make a survey of existing professional literature in the chosen area. Useful starting points are as Google Scholar and Web of Science a bibliographic database. You can access WoS and many other resources from the library catalogue and databases. There may also be published bibliographies of relevant

works. If not, you will need to compile your own from library catalogues, citations in other literature etc.

With regard to unpublished research, you may need to contact other academic institutions, both in the UK and overseas, to discover the nature and progress of continuing research projects. In some subjects (e.g. history) there are online guides to theses completed and in progress. Your supervisor should be able to advise. There are also various published lists of completed PhD theses which are available through reference libraries.

2.3.1 Bibliography and reference managing software

It is very important to keep an accurate bibliography throughout your project. You may want to compile your own bibliographic database of relevant works, both published and unpublished. Reference Manager and Endnote are programs specifically developed to manage bibliographic references. They should be available through College networks, although if you want to use on your own computer, you will need to purchase the software from <http://www.bilaney-consultants.co.uk/>. References can be entered either manually or by importing from a wide variety of online services. Zotero (<https://www.zotero.org/>) is a free plugin for the Firefox and Chrome browsers that will help manage your bibliography and citations.

2.3.2 Literature Review section

Having compiled your initial literature survey, you should undertake a programme of selective background reading. The bibliography can be added to as your work progresses and will serve as the basis of your footnotes and final bibliography. Ensure that references are recorded fully and consistently, in the form they will appear in your bibliography.

You will be expected to submit your literature review to your dissertation supervisor at some point between the middle of May and beginning of June.

Once you have reviewed the existing literature you will be in a better position to define your precise area of research and to produce a thesis outline. Although both may need to be modified in the light of further research, the basic structure should now be laid.

2.4 Writing up

It is advisable to submit at least one draft chapter for comment by your supervisor. It is important not to leave all the writing up to the end! Writing and obtaining feedback on a draft chapter will greatly assist with the compilation of the final dissertation.

When writing be concise and pertinent. Verbosity, repetition and loose writing should be avoided. A poor writing style will not impress the examiners and may make it hard for them to follow your ideas.

Keep in mind the need for a clear line of argument as you reveal the results of your research.

- What do the results demonstrate (or fail to demonstrate)?
- How does your research relate to other work in the field?
- What are its limitations and what remains to be done?

Analysis and comment are essential. The work that you submit must be more than a record of raw data or results.

Be careful not to lose your reader by moving into an explanation without providing adequate context. Give enough general background to make your information meaningful. Then build your case logically, and finally, at the end of the section or the chapter, bring your ideas

together in a coherent summary. In this way your reader will be able to follow the logic of your thinking.

The body of the dissertation should generally be divided into three parts (excluding ancillary material such as appendices):

Introduction (usually one chapter)	Justification for the study, explanation of the context, content, exclusions, limitations, sources, research questions e.g. Abstract Introduction/Motivation Literature Review Statement of Ethics Methodology
Main text (divided into several chapters)	e.g. Results Discussion (chapters may be arranged thematically or chronologically, as appropriate)
Conclusion (normally one chapter)	Summary of argument, significance of findings, scope for further action or additional research, future work

2.5 Problems

Problems sometimes encountered by students during their dissertation include:

- lack of clear definition of topic
- lack of sources
- lack of technical skills (research, presentation, programming etc.)
- lack of workspace or computer equipment
- lack of time to research or complete
- lack of financial resources
- lack of originality (e.g. discovery of other research duplicating or overlapping with chosen topic).

In the majority of cases, such problems can be solved by communication with your supervisor. For example, the supervisor may be able to help you in clarifying or refocusing your topic, seeking technical advice, or altering your work schedule. It is important that you approach your supervisor as soon as the problem arises, as it will become increasingly difficult to remedy the situation.

2.6 Managing your supervisor

It will help both you and your supervisor if you are very clear about what to expect from each other. The following are some tips on how to get the best out of the supervision process.

2.6.1 Supervisions

Arrange a schedule of appointments early in the process and stick to them (even if you have made less progress than expected since the last appointment). Do not expect your supervisor to manage the project for you, remind you to make or keep appointments, or chase up work. This is your research, and you are expected to be in charge of it. If you need a meeting and don't have one scheduled, ask!

Nevertheless your supervisor should be supportive and helpful, and provide feedback and suggestions on the direction of your work.

2.6.2 Drafts

If the appointment is to discuss a draft, send the draft several working days before the appointment. Obviously, the longer the draft, the more time needed before the appointment. Expect this process to take even longer during "peak periods" (e.g. near the submission deadline). In particular:

- Please do not expect the reading of your draft to be given automatic priority over other essential teaching, research and administrative work that your supervisor has to undertake.
- Please do not expect your draft to be read "overnight" or "over the weekend".
- Make sure both you and your supervisor are aware of any periods when supervision cannot take place (e.g. because of holidays, conference attendance or other periods away from college). Take these into account when scheduling work on the dissertation.

2.6.3 Before handing in a draft

- Has the draft been read through carefully?
- Has the draft been spell checked?
- Is the draft written in plain, concise and grammatically correct English?
- Are all the pages and sections numbered? (This is essential for written feedback.)
- Is the draft double-spaced? (Again, this is essential for written feedback.)
- Is the draft reasonably easy to read and understand? Is there an indication of where it will be placed in, or in what way it will contribute to, the overall dissertation?
- Is there an accompanying (albeit tentative or provisional) outline or table of contents for the whole dissertation?
- Does the draft include all references? (Do not hand in drafts with the intention to "add references later".)
- If the draft includes previously submitted material, is there a clear indication of which bits are new

3 Presenting your dissertation

3.1 Format

All dissertations are submitted electronically, but we also require **two printed and bound copies to be submitted as well**. Double spacing must be used, except for indented quotations, tables, bibliographies and footnotes, which should be single-spaced. The left-side margin should be not less than 40mm (1.5 inches) and other margins not less than 20mm (0.75 inch).

Images and other illustrations should be embedded in your document.

All dissertations will be submitted via Turnitin. Make sure you read the UCL documentation for using Turnitin.

Your dissertation should be bound in accordance with the UCL Research Degrees soft binding regulations: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/current-students/research_degrees/thesis_binding_submission

Binders which will bind your dissertations to the UCL standard can be found at the following webpage: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/current-students/exams_and_awards/GI/binders

3.2 Order of contents

The order of contents within the dissertation should be as follows:

Title page	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Title of the work• Full name of candidate (as registered)• Date• Module title and code (BENVGSC6 for MSc (or MSc) Dissertation)• Name of your supervisor• Word count <p>The title page should also include the following statement: 'This dissertation is submitted in part requirement for the MSc (Or MRes) in the Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis, Bartlett Faculty of the Build Environment, UCL.'</p>
Abstract	A summary of content, context and conclusions (300 words maximum). This is not included in your word count.
Declaration	A signed declaration of originality and word count in the following format: 'I hereby declare that this dissertation is all my own original work and that all sources have been acknowledged. It is xxx words in length.'
Table of contents	Showing title and page number of each chapter, section and subsection (see Appendix A for sample layout)
List(s) of tables and figures	Titles of tables / illustrations and page numbers illustrations etc. (if appropriate)
List of acronyms and abbreviations	Key to abbreviations used in the text
Acknowledgements	Any and all help received in the preparation of your dissertation should be acknowledged here

Text	Divided into chapters, sections and sub-sections as appropriate
Footnotes	At the foot of each page
Bibliography	A list of all works cited and referred to in your text. Everything cited in the main body of the dissertation should appear in your bibliography and everything in your bibliography should be cited or referred to in your text.
Appendices and Glossaries	As required

3.3 Layout

Legibility and clear layout are essential. A good quality publication could be used as a model.

In particular:

- spacing (e.g. between sections) should be reasonably generous
- bold print should be used for headings
- each chapter should begin on a new page.

3.4 Quotations

Sometimes you will want to quote the words of another author in the text of your dissertation. Short quotations (less than three lines of text) should be included in your own text, enclosed in single quotation marks. Double quotation marks should only be used for quotes within quotes. Longer quotations (more than three lines) should form a separate paragraph, indented and single spaced, without quotation marks.

Quotations should reproduce the original spelling, punctuation and emphasis, as far as possible. Any changes should be indicated by a note in square brackets within the text. **It is vital that you understand the difference between plagiarism and quotation.** If in doubt always quote and cite references. If you cannot find the source of an idea or quotation, take it out. Never pass off the ideas of others as your own work.

The context of the quotation is also key. What do you say about it? How does it inform your work? Do you agree or disagree?

3.5 Punctuation

Try to use punctuation sparingly and correctly. To quote Judith Butcher, 'use the minimum punctuation necessary to clarify what would otherwise be ambiguous or misleading' (J Butcher, *Copy-editing: the Cambridge Handbook for Editors, Authors and Publishers*, 3rd ed., Cambridge University Press, 1992, p.106).

3.6 Capital letters

Upper case (capital) letters should be used sparingly. They should be employed for personal names (e.g. John Smith), institutional and organisational names (e.g. British Library, Public Record Office), peoples (e.g. the British) and geographical names (e.g. Ghana). Optionally, they may also be used in chapter or section headings and in citing the titles of published works. They should not be used routinely for emphasis (e.g. the archivist, not the Archivist).

3.7 Numbering of sections and pagination

Sections and sub-sections should be numbered in a simple sequence (see Appendix A for an example). Complex numbering schemes and multiple hierarchies of sub-sections should be avoided. Aim for clarity and simplicity.

All pages (including illustrations, tables etc.) should be numbered in one continuous sequence (from the title page to the end of the appendices) in Arabic numerals from number 1 onwards.

Footnotes should re-start from number 1 at the beginning of each chapter. Arabic numerals should be used.

3.8 Bibliographic citations

It is essential that citations in your dissertation are accurate and consistent.

Your dissertation should contain a comprehensive bibliography detailing every work referenced in the text. The bibliography should be laid out in alphabetical order according to the Harvard convention. The following list gives examples of referencing for most kinds of information sources used in dissertations.

3.8.1 Books:

Harvey, D (1996) *Justice, Nature and the Geography of Difference*, Blackwell, Oxford.

Hohenberg, P M and Lees, L H (1985) *The Making of Urban Europe 1000-1950*, Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA.

3.8.2 Book chapters:

Pearce, D (1992) Economics and the global environmental challenge. In I H Rowlands and M Greene (eds) *Global Environmental Change and International Relations*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, pp 60-87.

3.8.3 Journal articles:

Smith, N D (1993) Anatomy of an avulsion, *Sedimentology* **26**: 1-24.

Scott, A J and Paul, A (1990) Collective order and economic co-ordination in industrial agglomerations: the technopoles of southern California, *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy* **8**: 179-93.

3.8.4 Academic working papers:

Leyshon, A (1990) Financial infrastructure withdrawal, *Working Papers on Producer Services* **3**, Department of Geography, University of Hull.

3.8.5 Newspaper articles:

McCarthy, M, Brown, C and Heath, T (1999) Farming hit by worst crisis since the Thirties, *Independent*, 28 August.

3.8.6 Web sources:

Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food (MAFF) (UK) (2001) *Organic Aid Scheme*, (<http://www.maff.gov.uk/environ/envsch/oas.htm>) – accessed 18 May 2001.

3.8.7 Citing references in the text:

Any work used should also be cited in the text of your dissertation, giving page numbers where you quote directly from a source:

As Hobsbawm (1992, p 11) has noted, the very term English nationalism 'sounds odd to many ears'.

While Scott and Paul (1990) maintain that new industrial districts have engendered a new localism, others are more sceptical.

Your bibliography should include all references cited in your dissertation. A common mistake is to exclude a reference because it is embedded in a quotation from another work that is itself listed in your bibliography. For example:

As Harvey (1996, p 53) notes, 'The latter all *produce* – to use Lefebvre's (1991) terminology – their own forms of space and time.

Even if you have not directly used Lefebvre (1991), it must be referenced as well as Harvey (1996) in your bibliography, because both references are cited. This is not cheating. It is not the same as 'padding out' your bibliography with superfluous references – which is an unacceptable practice.

3.8.8 Further advice on citations

See also the UCL information on citation and avoiding plagiarism:

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/current-students/guidelines/plagiarism>

And the Moodle page: Plagiarism and academic writing

<https://moodle.ucl.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=12731>

3.9 Final Checking

Before submission, the work should be thoroughly proof-read and corrected. In particular, check that bibliographic references are complete and consistent.

Spelling should be checked using a dictionary or a computerised spelling checker. If you use a spelling checker you should proof-read the text after using it, to ensure that the automatic corrections are accurate and that no inadvertent errors have been introduced. It is important to eliminate all spelling and typing errors before submitting the work.

Appendix A: Marking Criteria

MSc Dissertation Marking Matrix

Criterion	A**	A*	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
%	90-100	80-89	70-79	60-69	50-59	40-49	30-39	20-29	0-10
Review (theoretical and methodological literature)	Thorough and systematic coverage of the field, summarising a plethora of relevant references in a coherent and succinct manner.	Extensive reading of relevant material, accessible and engaging discussion of literature demonstrating new insights.	Significant reading beyond core literature, careful selection and discussion showing synthesis of material.	Evidence of wider reading, robust citation and selection of literature.	Understanding and appropriate selection and citation of relevant literature.	Limited evidence of wider reading, references poorly selected and/or cited.	Very limited evidence of reading. Missing or mis-typed citations.	Very poor referencing or range of reading.	No evidence of any reading and no references.
Context and Research Design	Exceptional understanding of field and clearly defined and highly pertinent research question(s), with impeccable research design.	Detailed and comprehensive understanding of context, novel and relevant research question(s), excellent research design.	Excellent understanding of research field, well-directed research question(s), with well-formed aims and objectives.	Sound understanding of research area leading to a relevant research question (or questions). Clear and achievable aims and objectives.	Some understanding of research context, with minor flaws in research question (or questions). Unrealistic aims and/or objectives.	Failure to understand research landscape, and/or poorly defined research question (or questions). Aims and objectives unclear or misdirected.	Very poor grasp of research context, and/or no clear research question, aims or objectives.	No evidence of understanding context or statement of aims.	No evidence of engagement with existing research.
Difficulty (complexity or challenge of task, factoring support from tutors)	Challenging goals, and substantial deliverables requiring significant research and/or skills development, largely achieved independently	Challenging project involving extensive independent research and/or independent skill development.	Challenging project with complex research methodologies, showing evidence of independent learning and research.	Project shows progression from core taught material, and evidence of independent study.	Relatively easy goals, falling within core taught courses, and/or achieved with extensive academic support.	Supervisor required to give substantial help for basic tasks. Unchallenging project.	Supervisor giving substantial help even on the most basic of tasks. Completely undemanding project.	Goals almost entirely absent. Supervisor giving substantial help to achieve even minor objectives.	No goals whatsoever, no attempt to do anything other than to reproduce supervisor's help.
Execution, Interpretation and Reflection	Sophisticated and nuanced application of technique(s) and insightful critical reflection on results, data and processes.	Excellent use of techniques, detailed interpretation and critical reflection on results and outcomes.	Highly capable application of techniques, with detailed interpretation and ample evidence of critical reflection on processes and outcomes.	Appropriate application of techniques, sound interpretation of results, evidence of critical reflection on processes and outcomes.	Minor flaws in application of techniques. Limited or flawed interpretation of results, and little evidence of critical reflection.	Major flaws in application of techniques and/or interpretation of results.	Flaws render application of techniques inappropriate or misleading.	Very poor use of techniques, no usable or interpretable results.	No application of techniques.
Communication (quality of writing, structure, visualisation, and/or presentation)	Engaging, clear and lucid writing, incorporating innovative visual components as core elements of the narrative.	Exemplary writing: concise prose with excellent flow, accessibility and clarity. Novel use of visual components to communicate results.	Excellent writing with very few errors. High quality maps, graphs and/or other data visualisations which are well integrated, enhancing the communication of results.	Well-structured dissertation with only minor/occasional flaws in written English. Figures and diagrams well-chosen and presented.	Dissertation adequately structured and written, although may contain flaws in written English. Visual elements poorly chosen, badly executed, or not clearly linked to text.	Dissertation has substantial issues around structure or use of written English.	Poorly structured or posing readability issues due to English usage.	Very poorly expressed dissertation with major errors or omissions.	Very difficult to understand due to structure and/or writing.

In CASA MRes and MSc dissertations are marked using five criteria: Review, Context and Research Design, Difficulty, Execution-Interpretation-Reflection, and Communication. The detailed matrix for understanding these categories and how to create a successful project and dissertation (shown above) can be downloaded from Moodle and should form part of your discussion with your supervisor in your project planning stages.

Appendix B: MRes Dissertation Guide

MRes Dissertations are similar in form to MScs, but more substantial in scope and outcome. They carry a higher credit assignment (90 rather than 60), and are assessed through a dissertation and a publication.

The assessment criteria have much in common with the MSc dissertation assessment scheme, sharing, as they do, a set of principles for research practice and writing. The MRes is assessed through two submissions, and it is the student's responsibility to tailor their writing and structure to the demands of each document.

Lecturers will mark each component of assessment against the five criteria (Review, Context and Research Design, Difficulty, Execution/Interpretation/Reflection, Communication) and aggregate marks into marks and grades for each category, and an overall grade.

Dissertation (70%)

Although the research project is bigger component of the degree than MScs, the dissertation is no longer (10,000, with a penalty applied if it exceeds 12,000 words). It is an additional challenge to fit a larger project into these constraints.

The purpose of this document is to provide a detailed summary of your work; to demonstrate performance on the assessment criteria; and to provide evidence to your assessors of the work you've completed.

Publication (30%)

The publication should be aimed at an appropriate journal in your field, and follow a structure based on current issues of that journal. In consultation with your supervisor, you may decide that a technical report or working paper is a more suitable, but this needs to be agreed and discussed in advance with your supervisor.

Because the publication is based on the same research as the dissertation document, it is likely to have a basis in common with the dissertation; however, students should prepare an original and distinct document and not "cut and paste" from their dissertation (images and figures notwithstanding). Students should pay particular attention to how they can communicate their key outputs in a condensed form – the communication category will be assessed in the context of this document being a shorter research publication.

Statement of Ethics

All MRes dissertations are required to include a clear Statement of Ethics. This should be included in a separate subsection – as part of the methodology, for example. The length and details of the Statement of Ethics will vary – for example, a study which makes physiological measurements on people, or collects or uses sensitive information from people, may need a full ethics application, which could be explained briefly and the full application presented in appendix. In other cases CASA students may be dealing with issues of deanonymisation or privacy, for example, and they would need to explain potential risks or storing and analysing the data, and how they have mitigated against these risks. In other cases, students may be working with aggregate, anonymous public data, which would only require a brief reference to how disclosure or privacy issues have been dealt with by the data collectors.

Note that a Risk Assessment is distinct from an Ethical Assessment, in that Risk Assessment is focussed on risks to the student and research team; Ethics focuses on risks to participants and wider society. In both cases risks can different forms – physical, reputational, medical, political, etc.

Make sure ethics forms a key part of your discussion with your supervisor when planning, executing, and writing up your project.

Ethics is categorised under “Reflection” in the “Execution, Interpretation and Reflection”, and the absence of a Statement of Ethics will be reflected under that category. In exceptional circumstances, a lack of ethical reflection can lead to a mark penalty across the dissertation and could lead to a fail mark.