

Dissertation Guidelines

for

MSc Programmes

2022-2023

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## DISSERTATION KEY FACTS

All MSc candidates must undertake a dissertation to complete their degree. This dissertation is normally written in the summer leading up to the end of the course. You must achieve a minimum mark of 50% in your dissertation and need to have passed modules worth at least two-thirds of the credits with no more than 20 credits with marks below 40%.

Students are responsible for completing three documents and meeting the below deadlines throughout the dissertation process:

* 1. Submit Request for Supervision Form **3pm** **Thursday 30th March 2023**
  2. Submit Agreed Project Proposal **3pm Thursday 22nd June 2023**
  3. Submission of Dissertation **3pm Thursday 31st August 2023**

Course Directors (or nominated others) are responsible for dissertation modules for their Courses. They offer general support including an up-to-date Moodle page and dissertation handbook to ensure that all students understand dissertation research and the process at NUBS.

Supervisors assist their students as they prepare their agreed proposals and final dissertations. How this occurs will depend on the programme the student is registered on. However, generally a supervisor will comment on student plans, suggest relevant literature, comment on progress and draft chapters, and direct students to other sources of relevant support. Supervisors are responsible for the first marking student work whereas the department head appoints an appropriate second marker.

NUBS MSc Education and Student Experience team will advise students of allocation of their supervisor by **3pm Thursday 11th May 2023.**

## OBJECTIVE OF DISSERTATION

The purpose of the MSc dissertation is to provide you with the opportunity to undertake independent research in a topic *appropriate to the title of the degree for which you are registered*. In undertaking the dissertation, you should look to draw on and extend material covered in your course. Dissertations can be theoretical and conceptual or empirical – whether quantitative or qualitative. The typical dissertation is likely to be structured around a review of the relevant literature, an outline of methodology and a presentation and analysis of empirical results. However, this does not preclude the use of alternative formats for the dissertation.

## CHOICE OF TOPIC

You are encouraged to begin thinking about a suitable topic for your dissertation as soon as possible. It must be appropriate to the title of the degree for which you are registered. Your Course Director, personal tutor and other teaching staff can provide further guidance on the suitability of dissertation topics given your area of study.

Where appropriate, you will find a list of indicative topics on the Request for Supervision Form for your course. In addition, some members of staff will put forward dissertation topics in relation to areas in which they are specifically interested and a list will be placed on the relevant dissertation module Moodle page. You will be asked to submit an initial proposal for your dissertation and your eventual topic will be decided by your Course Director who will be advised by the MSc Course Team. You will be advised of this decision in a timely fashion.

You must check that your chosen topic is realistic in terms of the time available for completion, the scope of the problem and the availability of information and other resources. It is important to define the specific issues to be addressed, the research methods that you expect to adopt for each of your topic areas *and the specific resources required to complete the work.* Once you have made these decisions, you should write them up on the Agreed Project Proposal. Your supervisor should sign this form and confirm the feasibility of your proposed research project. If you supervisor does not agree that your project is feasible, you should discuss with them a plan to progress you research.

Please note that it is not the policy of the Business School to fund dissertation costs.

## RESEARCH ETHICS

Where a topic requires primary research (e.g., interviews, questionnaires, focus groups) involving human participants or their data, you must receive ethical approval for your project before the research can start. There are four standard research protocols (procedures) that have been pre-approved by the School Research Ethics Committee – one for business plans, one for interviews and/or focus groups, one for web-based surveys, and one for company-based projects. Copies of these protocols together with the required GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) form are on the [Business School Student Handbook page](https://moodle.nottingham.ac.uk/course/view.php?id=129338/#section-4) on Moodle.

If your proposed research fits the criteria for these standard protocols, you may (with your supervisor’s agreement) use the advance approval granted to these protocols. If your project does not fit either protocol, you will have to apply for ethical approval for your individual project (using the Review Checklist). We do not recommend applying for ethical approval for your project because the process is lengthier, more onerous and demanding. It also requires a higher degree of ethical awareness and training while a positive outcome is not always guaranteed. It is therefore advisable that you develop a research project that fits one of the standard research protocols.

You will be asked to specify on the ‘Agreed Dissertation Proposal Form’ whether your project requires ethical approval, and if so, whether you will be using one of the pre-approved protocols or applying for individual project approval. On your final Dissertation Submission Form, you must confirm the protocol you used (if any) and that you completed your research in line with the agreed ethical guidance.

Further information on research ethics can be obtained from the Moodle programme page and your supervisor. The school’s Research Ethics Officer, Davide Pero ([Davide.Pero@nottingham.ac.uk](file:///C:/Users/ezzgw/AppData/Local/Microsoft/Windows/INetCache/Content.Outlook/1HZWKHXF/Davide.Pero@nottingham.ac.uk)), can also assist in cases where individual ethical approval might be required, but your supervisor is your primary contact for advice on research ethics issues.

The process of ethical review and approval is important for safeguarding participants. It is important for researchers to be aware of ethical issues when planning and carrying out their research. The following additional guidance is adapted from the Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC) *Framework for Research Ethics* (2015).

<https://www.ukri.org/councils/esrc/guidance-for-applicants/research-ethics-guidance/framework-for-research-ethics/>

*There are six key principles of ethical research that the ESRC expects to be addressed whenever applicable:*

The six key principles:

1. *Research should be designed, reviewed and undertaken to ensure integrity, quality and transparency.*
2. *Research staff [including students undertaking research] and participants must normally be informed fully about the purpose, methods and intended possible uses of the research, what their participation in the research entails and what risks, if any, are involved.*
3. *The confidentiality of information supplied by research participants and the anonymity of respondents must be respected.*
4. *Research participants must take part voluntarily, free from any coercion.*
5. *Harm to research participants must be avoided in all instances.*
6. *The independence of research must be clear, and any conflicts of interest or partiality must be explicit.*

To implement these principles:

* *The responsibility for conduct of the research in line with relevant principles rests with the principal investigator (for MSc dissertations the principal investigator is the MSc student) and the research / employing organisation.*
* *Risks should be minimised.*
* *Research should be designed in a way that the dignity and autonomy of research participants is protected and respected at all times.*

## COMPANY BASED DISSERTATIONS

It may be possible to base your dissertation research on a real business issue faced by a company or organisation. A number of MSc courses offer company-based dissertations to their students. The number of projects is, however, limited and we cannot guarantee that you will be assigned to work on one of these projects. It is advisable that you contact your Course Director to inquire about the number of projects available.

If you have a company to partner with then this will need to be discussed with your Course Director to ensure that the research will fit with your degree and allows for the academic rigour required for an MSc level dissertation.

If you are interested in exploring this option, you are advised to speak to your Course Director in the first instance to check that this is possible. The Postgraduate Careers Team can provide support regarding how to approach businesses and how to start designing a project with them.

## SUPERVISION ARRANGEMENTS

Your dissertation will be assigned to a supervisor following the submission of your Request for Supervision form. You will be notified of the name of your supervisor by Student Services.

Please note that the Request for Supervision MUST be submitted by **3pm** **Thursday 30th March 2023** via the submission link on your relevant dissertation module Moodle pageif your dissertation is to be allocated to a supervisor by **3pm Thursday 11th May 2023**.

*If you do not submit the form by this date there will inevitably be a delay in the allocation of your dissertation to a supervisor.*

Once assigned a supervisor it is then *your responsibility*to make the *initial contact* with your supervisor *within one week of the notification* and develop a lengthier proposal to the satisfaction of the supervisor before proceeding with your work.

The agreed plan should then be entered into the *Agreed Dissertation Proposal Form*. This must be signed by you, countersigned by your supervisor and submitted to the submission link on your relevant dissertation module Moodle page by **3pm Thursday 22nd June 2023**.

While the dissertation is an individual piece of work, the supervisor may be expected to:

(i) offer guidance in the specification of the dissertation topic and the formulation of the problem as well as providing some suggestions for preliminary reading;

1. offer assistance in outlining an appropriate structure for the dissertation and to review the outline structure of the dissertation; and
2. help in relation to any specific problems encountered in the course of the research and discuss ideas of possible approaches with you.

## OUTLINE OF YOUR FULL DISSERTATION PROPOSAL

You should provide an outline of your dissertation proposal for the first meeting with your assigned supervisor. Here are some of the issues that you might wish to consider:

**Title**. Why have you selected this topic? What particular knowledge or skills do you have to complete this project? Why is this topic interesting to you? What particular question(s) are you trying to answer by carrying out this work?

**What has already been written about the topic?** What theoretical framework can you follow for this work? Where do you expect to find information about previous research into this topic? What sources of information might there be practical / empirical aspects of this topic?

**Information requirements.** What is the nature of the information and evidence that you will need to complete this work? How do you expect to obtain such information and evidence?

**Research methodology and assumptions.** What approach do you expect to take to provide you with evidence on which to support your eventual conclusions? What assumptions underlie your approach?

**Description of proposed chapters.** Can you put together a description of the expected chapters of your dissertation and justify the logic of the proposed structure?

An outline could be written up in the form of an introductory chapter to the dissertation. Whatever your approach, the outline of your full dissertation proposal is a critical stage at the end of which both you and your supervisor should be convinced as to the feasibility and suitability of the dissertation.

However, many dissertations change shape as the research proceeds. Although the agreed outline of your full dissertation proposal forms the basis of an agreement between the supervisor and student as to the viability of the proposed dissertation, the details remain flexible providing you consult with your supervisor as to the nature of proposed changes.

## ENGAGEMENT AND ATTENDANCE

Students must attend all teaching activities necessary for the pursuit of their studies, undertake all associated assessments and attend meetings and other activities as required by their School or the University. Where students face difficulty in attending sessions or undertaking assessments and examinations, it is their responsibility to inform the School of this fact and to provide a satisfactory explanation. Please see the [Attendance and Engagement](https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/qualitymanual/registration-and-attendance/regs-governing-attendance-and-engagement.aspx) section on Quality Manual for further details on attendance and engagement regulations at the University. If you have circumstances that are affecting your attendance and studies, you are encouraged to speak to your personal tutor/supervisor in the first instance. The information you need to support you with an extenuating circumstances claim can be found below:

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/studentservices/services/extenuating-circumstances.aspx>

Contact between students and their academic supervisor normally takes place via face-to-face meetings, telephone, video conferencing, and email. Students are encouraged to initiate contact and can expect access to their supervisors’ equivalent to at least 4 meetings over the course of the dissertation.

Following each meeting, you should complete and submit the Dissertation Supervision Record form, detailing what was discussed in the meeting, action points, and the agenda for the next meeting. The submission should be approved by your supervisor.

Students are advised to submit a total of 4 supervision record forms via the link on your relevant dissertation module Moodle page by **3pm** on the following deadline dates.

* **Thursday 1st June 2023**
* **Thursday 29th June 2023**
* **Thursday 20th July 2023**
* **Thursday 17th August 2023**

Submission of the Dissertation Supervision Record forms is strongly recommended as they show evidence of your engagement with the dissertation module. Note that the form links on Moodle will become inactive after the above deadlines have passed.

It is not the job of the supervisor to read each and every draft of your work, nor to correct English grammar or spelling. While the university permits proofreading of works by third parties, to avoid any academic misconduct you should familiarise yourself with university’s policy which can be found here: <https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/qualitymanual/assessment-awards-and-deg-classification/pol-proofreading.aspx>. Normally, a supervisor will only read the complete dissertation report after the work has been submitted by you for marking. The supervisor will be the first marker of your dissertation.

It is your responsibility to maintain contact with your supervisor, and to notify Student Services or your Course Director should you experience any difficulty maintaining contact with them. You should also ensure that you are able to access your University email account during the period while you work on your dissertation as your supervisor or Student Services may wish to contact you concerning your dissertation. Should you have difficulty doing this you should inform both your supervisor and the Student Services as soon as possible.

Do note that most supervisors have research, teaching, conference and management commitments over the dissertation period. It is not normally anticipated that there will be regular contact during this period, so it is important to organise your work to ensure that the dissertation structure and method have been agreed early on. In the event of an emergency, you should contact your supervisor.

## PRESENTATION AND LENGTH OF YOUR DISSERTATION

**Length**

The length of your dissertation must not be more than 15,000 words. The word count of your dissertation does not include references and appendices. Please consult the Dissertation Specification for your programme of study on Moodle for full details. Discuss this with your supervisor as some dissertations, particularly those with a high quantitative element, may be of a shorter length. It should be typed in 11 or 12 point Verdana font, double or one and a half spaced on A4 paper with margins of approximately 2.5 centimetres (1 inch). The dissertation should be numbered straight through, not on a chapter by chapter basis.

**Format**

The first page should be a title page, formatted as shown below:

─────────────────────────────────────────

**Full Title of the Dissertation**

**by**

**Author's Name**

**Year of Publication**

A Dissertation presented in part consideration for the degree of *"Title of MSc Degree"*.

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The title page should be followed by a one page summary, the table of contents and the acknowledgements (if any).

**Chapter Structure and Appendices**

A clear chapter structure is important to reinforce the line of argument; appendices can be used for the presentation of certain types of factual material, mathematical/statistical proofs, survey results etc., since where to include these in the text would distract from the general argument.

**References**

All work done by other people - either published or unpublished - must be acknowledged and clearly referenced, as should the source of any published data, diagrams or photographs. Failure to do so may constitute the academic offence of plagiarism.

References to the work of others should be made in the text, citing author and date, for example: 'Tellis (1986) argues that ...'. A comprehensive bibliography, with references sorted alphabetically should be included at the end of the dissertation. It is important that these references should be accurate and include all the information required to enable a reader to find the references cited. We recommend that you follow the Harvard system for referencing. This entails the author(s) name(s) cited in the text (as above) and a list of references giving full detail of the source at the end of the dissertation in the form shown below. Where possible the use of footnotes should be avoided when referencing.

The following formats in the list of references should be acceptable:

For a journal paper: Tellis, G J (1986), 'Beyond the Many Faces of Price: An Integration of Pricing Strategies', *Journal of Marketing*, vol. 50, pp. 145-60.

For a book: Kotler, P (1980), *Marketing Management Analysis, Planning and Control*, Prentice Hall, New Jersey.

For a chapter in an edited book:

Fenn P and Hodges R (1997), 'Long-tail liabilities and Claims Management in the NHS', in Baldwin R (ed.), *Law and Uncertainty: Risks and Legal Processes*, Kluwer Law International, London.

For a conference paper: Knight, J A G and Lebrecht, H M (1979), 'Tool control and distribution and work-holding requirements in flexible manufacture', *Proceedings of the second Joint Polytechnic Symposium on Manufacturing Engineering*, Coventry, Guilford, IPC, pp. 14-24.

More detailed statements on referencing systems and practices are available in University Libraries.

**Footnotes**

While the use of footnotes is not generally encouraged, they may be used to highlight important points that would otherwise break the flow of the text. They should be identified numerically and presented at the foot of the page to which they refer. Endnotes should not be used.

**Diagrams and tables**

Diagrams and tables should normally be included in the text as close as possible to the point at which they are discussed. All diagrams (figures) and tables should be consecutively numbered. In the case of dissertations that contain an *unusually* large number of diagrams, it may be preferable to group these diagrams at the end of the relevant chapters or in an appendix.

**Dissertations containing information that is commercially sensitive**

There is provision for dissertations considered commercially sensitive to be classified as confidential. In these circumstances they are not placed upon public record for a number of years. Please discuss this with your supervisor if you consider that this may affect your dissertation.

## WORKING TOWARDS COMPLETION

It is strongly recommended that you plan your workload so to be completing your dissertation at least 2 weeks before the actual deadline. There are at least two good reasons for following this practice: (a) it is likely that you will have had little prior experience in managing a project of this magnitude, and therefore you may have a tendency to underestimate how much time each stage of your research will take; (b) accommodation contracts may terminate prior to the deadline so you will probably wish to avoid the disruption which would be caused by having to relocate over this period. We know from experience that with a reasonable level of organisation students should be able to complete two weeks prior to deadline quite comfortably.

## SUBMITTING YOUR COMPLETED DISSERTATION

The submission deadline is **3pm Thursday 31 August 2023.** Submissions made later than this date will be subject to a mark deduction of 5 marks for every working day late. In accordance with the Extenuating Circumstances Procedure, a claim for extenuating circumstance must be made prior to the deadline date (See also Section 13). Note that whether or not you have valid extenuating circumstances, it will not normally be possible for any dissertation submitted later than the deadline to be examined in time for December graduation.

Two electronic copies of the dissertation are required:

one via Moodle

one via edissertations

The edissertations copy must be submitted on-line: <http://edissertations.nottingham.ac.uk/deposit.html>

It is important that when you upload your work, that the drop down option for whom the dissertation will be visible and to is selected as **‘registered users only’.**

*(NB, if your dissertation is confidential then please instead choose the option* ***‘repository staff only’-*** *please see the section below on ‘Confidential Dissertations’ for more information).*

Dissertations which are awarded a distinction mark and are not confidential will be moved to the edissertation repository once the exam board has taken place.

For more information about how to upload your dissertation to the eDissertations repository, please consult the guideline on the Moodle page.

## CONFIDENTIALITY

If you are using sensitive information, obtained from a company that you have been in contact with, they may ask you not to place your finished dissertation in the public domain without their authorisation. The University has a standard confidentiality agreement that can be used in such instances, which will require the signatures of both the student and the company.

You will also need to indicate when you submit your dissertation that there is a confidentiality agreement in place, and that your work must not be available to the public domain. Please ensure this is clearly marked ‘CONFIDENTIAL’ on the cover page of the copy you submit.

## EXTENSIONS

Please refer to the University Quality Manual (in particular Sections, 1.5 and 1.6) at

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/academicservices/currentstudents/extenuating-circumstances/extenuating-circumstances-procedure.aspx>

to see what constitute allowable extenuating circumstances (EC). Please note that extensions cannot be awarded for computer failure or loss, loss or damage to storage media, problems and delays collecting data and so on. So keep plenty of backups and stay organised!

Other circumstances that cannot be awarded an extension include returning home, going on summer holidays and any quarantine requirements in other countries. For more examples of the kind of acceptable and unacceptable circumstances, please refer to the University uality Manual (in particular Sections, 3 and 4) at:

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/academicservices/currentstudents/extenuating-circumstances/guidance-on-acceptable-circumstances-and-evidence-ec-procedure.aspx>

Extensions can be awarded for **up to 15 working days** (from the dissertation deadline) only. If the EC Panel decides that EC require more than 15 working days, then the student will be awarded a **first sit.** In this case, the student will graduate in the following year, either in March (inter-ceremony) or in the Summer.

In addition to those listed in the Quality Manual, the School will also consider applications for an extension (via the EC procedure) on the following grounds:

* where a student has accepted an offer of long-term full-time employment and where the employment contract begins prior to **31 August 2023.** For more information, please refer to the University Quality Manual at:

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/qualitymanual/registration-and-attendance/guidance-on-employment-during-studies.aspx>

* where a student is required to undertake more than two assessments during the Summer period. In this case, the student will be granted an extension of **10 working days** (from the dissertation deadline).

Please bear in mind that all claims under the EC procedure must be in **English** and supported by independent, reliable documentary evidence of inability to comply with the dissertation requirements.

Prior to making an EC claim, students are strongly advised to discuss this with their dissertation supervisor at the earliest possible opportunity.

## GUIDELINES FOR ASSESSMENT OF MSc DISSERTATIONS

**Assessment Criteria**

The assessment of the dissertation will be based on the academic quality of the work. Particular attention will be paid to the ability to integrate conceptual and empirical material, the depth of understanding of the literature, the appropriateness of the methodology and the suitability of methods of analysis.

In addition, the following factors will be taken into consideration:

(i) the extent of self-organisation and ability demonstrated by the student;

(ii) the effectiveness, quality of work produced and the extent to which the objectives of the project were met;

(iii) the organisation and structure of the project;

(iv) the quality of referencing, appendices, figures and programs where relevant;

(v) the quality of the project as a source of clear, concise, interesting information.

The supervisor gives marks out of 100 based on the quality of the dissertation.

**Level of pass guidelines**

The Postgraduate taught programme marking scheme used within the Business School may be significantly different to that you have experience of elsewhere. As a consequence, you should not be alarmed if you are awarded marks in the 50s or 60s, as these are perfectly respectable grades.

The complete range of marking standards and associated classifications is as follows:

**Classification Mark/Comments**

**Distinction** **80+** Outstanding piece of work

All major and minor objectives achieved

Excellent comprehension and informed criticism and analysis

Evidence of outstanding work beyond question and some originality

Free from errors and showing advanced analytical skills

**Distinction** **70-79** Excellent piece of work

All major and some minor objectives achieved

Very good comprehension and analysis of the issues involved

Excellent familiarity with the source material

No major errors and only occasional minor errors

**Merit**  **60-69** Careful and clear piece of work

Most major objectives achieved

Good understanding of the topic

Good grasp and analysis of major issues

No major errors though some minor errors

**Pass** **50-59** Middle of the range piece of work

Basic question answered with relevant analysis

Discusses and understands most relevant issues

Material a bit thin and/or poorly focused

Possible major and some minor errors

**Fail** **30-49** A failed piece of work

Poor understanding of the chosen subject area.

Not a full analysis of the problem/topic

Shows some understanding of the general field

Inadequate reading/research/preparation

Major errors

**Fail**  **0-29** A badly failed piece of work

Very poor arguments and analysis

Completely inadequate reading/research/preparation

Generally unsound

## ACADEMIC MISCONDUCT

The University’s regulations relating to academic misconduct can be found in the Quality Manual on the link below:

<https://www.nottingham.ac.uk/qualitymanual/assessment-awards-and-deg-classification/pol-academic-misconduct.aspx>

When you undertake any form of assessment at the University of Nottingham you are expected to adhere to high standards of academic integrity, honesty and trust.  If such high standards are not met, you may be accused of academic misconduct.  Under its regulations, the University defines academic misconduct as**“any inappropriate activity or behaviour by a student which may give that student, or another student, an unpermitted academic advantage in a summative assessment”**and is considered unacceptable in a scholarly community. Such misconduct may include – but is not limited to – plagiarism, collusion or misconduct in exams.

If you are ever suspected of academic misconduct in the Business School, you will be required to attend an academic misconduct meeting chaired by the Business School’s Conduct Officer or departmental Academic Misconduct Officer.  An administrator from Student Services will also be present at the meeting and will keep a written record.  The academic who initially raised the academic misconduct allegation, or another academic from the module concerned, may also be present.  If you are invited to attend an academic misconduct meeting, you may do so alone or you may choose to bring one other person to represent or support you if you wish.  This person may be a friend or an Officer of the Students’ Union.  Please note, however, that the University does not permit formal legal representation at an initial academic misconduct meeting. Should you fail to attend an academic misconduct meeting it may be conducted in your absence.

If you are invited to attend an academic misconduct meeting, you will be asked to provide a written statement.  This needs to be provided either at the meeting or within five working days of the meeting taking place.

After the academic misconduct meeting has taken place, you will be formally notified of its outcome within two weeks.  If you are then unhappy with the outcome you can refer yourself to the University’s Academic Misconduct Committee.  If you have a previous case of academic misconduct recorded against you, then you may be referred directly to a central hearing of the University’s Academic Misconduct Committee.

The most common penalty for a first offence is usually a mark of zero for part of, or the entire piece of coursework or examination concerned. For those students who commit a second offence, the penalties imposed by the University could be a mark of zero for 60 credits, a mark of zero for 120 credits or termination of course.

**Plagiarism**

The academic misconduct of plagiarism is defined by the University as “representing another person’s work or ideas as one’s own, for example by failing to follow convention in acknowledging sources, use of quotation marks etc.”  This includes the unauthorised use of one student’s work by another student and the commissioning, purchase and submission of a piece of work, in part or whole, as the student’s own.  If you follow the guidelines for referencing then you will be able to build upon other people’s work within your own without any fear of being accused of plagiarism.

The key point to remember is that whenever you include any material from a website, journal article, book or other source in your work it must be made absolutely obvious that it is not your own work and referenced accordingly.  This means that in each and every instance where you copy verbatim or paraphrase other people’s work you must include an accompanying reference in the text as well as in your end-of-text references. End-of-text references by themselves are never sufficient.  Also not sufficient are in-text references that are removed from the sentences in which you cite or paraphrase the work of another.

Those marking your coursework will assume that everything they read is your own work unless you clearly indicate otherwise. Hence, if they discover any material within your work that is from another source but which is not indicated as such, they will report a case of suspected plagiarism to the departmental Academic Misconduct Officer or Business School’s Conduct Officer.  The marking of your work will then be delayed until all formal academic misconduct procedures have been completed.

**Understanding Plagiarism**

There are several forms of plagiarism.  Firstly, it constitutes plagiarism to copy without appropriate referencing either exactly or virtually word for word any content from a web page, journal article, book or any other work.  Please note that this includes copying the work of other students.

For example, you may be writing a report on future food shortages and have read the article “How to Feed 8 Billion People” by Lester R. Brown published in *The Futurist* in January 2010.  In this article the following text appears on page 30:

Food security will deteriorate further unless leading countries collectively mobilize to stabilize production, stabilize climate, stabilize aquifers, conserve soils, protect cropland, and restrict the use of grain to produce fuel for cars.

If in your report you incorporated the above sentence from this article word for word, but did not put it in quotation marks and include a reference immediately after it in the text, then you would have committed plagiarism.  To be clear, to avoid plagiarism you would have to do the following (bold only included for emphasis here):

“Food security will deteriorate further unless leading countries collectively mobilize to stabilize production, stabilize climate, stabilize aquifers, conserve soils, protect cropland, and restrict the use of grain to produce fuel for cars” (Brown, 2010, p.30).

Note also that if you used the ideas from the article in your own essay and rephrased them in such a way as to imply that those rephrased ideas were your own work (again without attributing them directly to the author) then this would also constitute plagiarism.  For example, the following passage (if non-attributed) would be considered a plagiarised version of the above text:

There will be a further deterioration in food security if leading countries do not mobilize to stabilize climate, stabilize aquifers, stabilize production, protect cropland, conserve soils, and limit the quantity of grain used to make biofuels.

It should be noted that plagiarism could easily be avoided in the above case by prefacing the passage with something like “Brown, (2010) argues that . . .”

You must be aware that it is absolutely critical to include the (Author, Date) reference in the text of your work where your quotation or paraphrase is included.  To be absolutely clear, it is not sufficient to only include a reference in your end-of-text references.  This is because it is your responsibility to signal to your reader exactly which contributions are your own and which are taken from or informed by others.

**Examples of Recent Plagiarism Cases**

While all cases are different, it is worth noting two particular examples of inappropriate practice that have frequently resulted in proven academic misconduct plagiarism cases in the Business School.

Firstly, an increasing number of students are apparently conducting research by pasting material from websites or e-journals into their own intermediate research document. Some such students have then pasted material from this document into their work and have been found guilty of plagiarism as material from another source has been found in their work with no attribution.  It is therefore vital that if you ever paste anything from a website or other electronic publication into an intermediate document that you also keep track of the source of the material.  Further, you are advised that you should never paste anything into your work from an intermediate document without including quotation marks and/or verifying that you have included an appropriate reference in the text alongside the material, as well as a full reference to the initial source material at the end of your work.

Secondly, several recent plagiarism cases have involved students including a reference to a source at the end of their work but not in the body text following every quotation or close paraphrase from the same.  This constitutes plagiarism because without the benefit of in-text references, those marking your assignment will not be able to differentiate your work from the work of others. In this context it is worth remembering that systems of referencing exist to enable you to indicate precisely where you are drawing from the work of others.

A list of References at the end of your work may hence be somewhat different from a Bibliography (as you may have included in previous work), as a Bibliography commonly contains a list of sources that have been consulted but not specifically referenced.

**Guidance on Turnitin & Other Text-Matching Software**

There are now a variety of online tools that allow you to submit an assignment for text-matching against a known databank of sources.  One such tool is the Turnitin software made available to all students at the University via the Moodle virtual learning environment.  Many people refer to Turnitin and other similar tools as plagiarism detection software.  However, such a description is incorrect. Not least this is because such tools only compare submitted work against a limited range of sources and cannot detect the inappropriate mass paraphrasing of other works.

**It is the policy of the Business School to very strongly advise all of its students against using Turnitin or any other piece of text-matching software as a means of verifying whether or not their work may be plagiarised.**

In recent years a large percentage of the proven academic misconduct plagiarism cases in the Business School have involved students copying work from each other. This is also something that Turnitin would not detect as it is not set to retain a copy of every document every student submits for checking. Many recent academic misconduct plagiarism cases in the Business School have also involved work copied from business reports that again Turnitin and other text-matching software often would not detect.

It is the strong advice of the Business School that you should avoid plagiarism by engaging in ethical and professional academic practice, rather than by using a tool such as Turnitin to check if you have included material copied from another source in your work.

It is the contention of the Business School that copying another party’s work into your own is a conscious activity. If you learn to work in an ethical and professional manner you should therefore have no need to use Turnitin. If you do have queries concerning appropriate referencing you are strongly encouraged to raise them with your module convenors, personal tutor and other relevant academic and academic-related members of Business School staff.

**To be absolutely clear, there is no level of percentage match generated by Turnitin or any other tool that is acceptable.**

Turnitin and similar tools are also limited in what they check.  This means that you cannot rely on Turnitin or similar software to verify your work to be free from plagiarism. Nor can you defend any academic misconduct charge using output from Turnitin or any other system.

**Collusion**

The academic misconduct of collusion is defined by the University as “co-operation in order to gain an unpermitted advantage”. This  may occur where students have consciously collaborated on a piece of work, in part or whole, and passed it off as their own individual efforts or where one student has authorised another to use their work, in part or whole, and to submit it as their own.  Unless explicitly described as group work, all Business School assessments are individual work. Except when completing group work, you must therefore ensure that the work you submit does not include the intellectual contribution of anybody other than yourself.  You must also ensure that you do not assist anybody else with their individual work.  This all means that you must not make or share calculations, diagrams, tables, essay plans or similar preparatory documents with other students.  Nor are you permitted to make use of any online or offline service that provides assistance with assignments.

Please note that the uploading of content to an essay sharing website may result in academic misconduct allegation, as you could be deemed to be assisting others with their work.  In 2010-2011, one student in the Business School completed and submitted a coursework essay and then chose to upload it to a website that required an essay to be supplied as a means of registration. This student was later accused of academic misconduct. This was because content from his essay appeared word-for-word in the essay of another student taking the same module.  This had happened because the site to which he uploaded his essay had sold it to the second student.

## FORMS

See your course dissertation module Moodle page for specific forms/links that include relevant themes and topics with forms below.

**AGREED PROPOSAL FORM**

**NUBS MSc Courses 2022/2023**

The agreed proposal is a critical stage in your dissertation. It confirms that you and your supervisor are convinced that your project is feasible and suitable given your programme of study. Your project may still change as the research proceeds however this proposal confirms the viability of your proposed research.

Once you have completed the sections below, please forward a copy to your supervisor. They will sign it and return it to you. You then need to upload an electronic copy with your supervisor’s signature to your Dissertation Moodle page by  **30th June 2022**.

If your supervisor has not approved the proposal as being appropriate for dissertation research, you should discuss with them a plan of action to develop your project. You **DO NOT** need to submit a revised form.

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**To be completed by the supervisor:**

Please tick if you have discussed this proposal with the student

Please tick if you approve this as an appropriate proposal for dissertation research given the student’s programme of study.

Name:

Date:

Signature:

**To be completed by the student:**

**Title**

Please provide a working title that reflects the focus of your proposed project.

**Objectives of the Dissertation**

What is the focus of your dissertation? What are the main objectives of your proposed research? Why is this area interesting to you/others? What particular question(s) are you trying to answer from your research?

**Background**

What knowledge or skills do you have to complete this dissertation?

**Literature review**

What do you know about the subject already? What has been written about the topic? What theoretical framework can you follow for this work? Where do you expect to find further research into your topic?

**Research methodology, ethics and timeline**

What data sources will you use to meet your research objectives? What analytic approach will you follow? What assumptions underlie your approach? Are there any ethical concerns in your proposed methods? What timeline will you follow to complete the research?

Please tick if your proposed research does not need ethics approval.

Please tick if your proposed research fits the four pre-approved standard research protocols.

Please tick if your proposed project does **not** fit the four pre-approved standard research protocols and that application for ethical approval has been applied and approved. **Please submit evidence of approval on Moodle.**

For further details on Research Ethics protocol please see Section 4.

**Description of proposed chapters.**

Briefly describe the chapters of your dissertation and justify the logic of the proposed structure.

**Length: up to 2,500 words**