

**Dissertation (CDAS)**  
**GEOG5099M**

**30 credits**

**MODULE HANDBOOK AND DISSERTATION GUIDANCE**

**2018-2019**



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## Module Information

### Module Description

Your dissertation is a substantive piece of research which you undertake independently. In contrast to a standard MSc dissertation, the requirement is for an extended synopsis of your PhD research project involving the articulation of research objectives, an outline literature review and an indicative methodology. It is, in effect, an extended PhD dissertation proposal that you will undertake over Term 3 (i.e. from Easter to end August).

However, you should remember that it is an opportunity for you to formally consider how the skills and techniques you have learned during the taught component of this programme could be applied to your PhD research. You are encouraged to draw on ideas from across your programme of study.

The CDAS dissertations undertaken via this module are supervised will come under the School of Geography.

The direction of your dissertation projects should align with your intended PhD. This means that the research questions are chosen and formulated by you but are developed in conversation and discussion with your supervisors. You should address the methodological aspects using desk-based research, you may wish to explore some secondary data sources and you can undertake primary data collection. As you are undertaking your dissertation in conjunction with an external organisation you may want to link this aspect to their data and the research objectives you have developed together. This will help to align your research to a practical issue of interest to them, making use of their data or other input, although this is not critical for a successful project

This will help to ensure that the MSc dissertation provides a valuable stepping stone towards the main PhD project, and is a good applied test of professional skills in a research environment, drawing on core research skills alongside some more advanced elements.

Regardless of the nature of the project itself, all dissertations must have a clearly defined aim and set of specific objectives that are novel or original. All dissertations should be written up as an academic piece of work, using the guidance provided in this handbook and by your supervisors. **You must take initiative to develop and manage your research. Supervisors are there for guidance and advice but you lead your individual projects.**

On completion of this module you will be able to:

- Design, executing and presenting a sustained piece of novel or original research related to Social Data Analytics.
- Work independently developing substantive research questions, using initiative and reasoned thinking to problem solve.
- Select and critically evaluate appropriate spatial and statistical analysis techniques and/or theories in order to address their research questions.
- Communicate research findings in an academic style, situating their findings within the broader academic literature and wider developments in the field or industry sector.

Your dissertation is worth 30 credits and is therefore an important component of your MSc.

### Module Team

The module team is comprised of Prof Lex Comber ([a.comber@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:a.comber@leeds.ac.uk)), Dr Luke Burns ([L.P.Burns@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:L.P.Burns@leeds.ac.uk)) and Eleri Pound ([E.A.Pound@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:E.A.Pound@leeds.ac.uk)).

However, your main points of contact are your PhD supervisory team. They are best placed to advise you on the detail and direction of your Msc Dissertation. As this is a Term 3 module (i.e. it runs over the summer) you are strongly encouraged to check your supervisors' availability over this period. Many staff are away at conferences, undertaking research and taking annual leave during the summer.

### On line information

There is no whole group teaching on this module (aside from one briefing session). Guidance information is available within this handbook or from your supervisor. Answers to frequently asked questions will also be posted on the module VLE site and will appear under 'announcements' – you should check this regularly.

### Assessment & Dates

Assessment for this module takes the form of:

1. A research proposal (**word limit 1,500 words**) which is due on **Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2019 (before 2pm)**. This is not formally graded but is used to give you detailed feedback on your dissertation ideas. We term this 'pass for progression' and you must submit a carefully considered and fully completed dissertation proposal. **A separate pro-forma is available on the VLE and must be used for this assignment.**
2. A dissertation (**word limit 8,000 words**) which is submitted **before 2pm on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> August 2019**. Your dissertation is worth 100% of your mark for this module. You must submit **an electronic copy of your dissertation** via the Turnitin link found on the VLE module site (under assessment).

NB The deadline for submitting work is **2pm** on the day of the deadline. **Please note that there is no leeway for word length.**

### Dissertation marks and feedback

All dissertation marks are provisional until confirmed by exam board and the external examiner. Feedback cannot be given until after the external examiner has confirmed your overall degree classification.

### Re-sit Requirements

If students fail the module, they can register to re-sit the module at the next available opportunity.

### Our expectations of you

This module is a very important part of your programme and we expect you to apply yourself to study fully during the summer. You should work on your dissertation during Term 3. This means that you should be working on your dissertation during the period between May and August.

We encourage you to take a break over the summer (e.g. a holiday or a visit to your family or friends), but we do expect you to be primarily based in Leeds. You must ensure that your supervisor is aware of extended periods when you will be away from Leeds or out of contact. It is up to you to organise your study around any pre-arranged holidays or family commitments.

Any extended absence or illness must be logged using the usual absence notification procedures.

## Dissertation Timetable

The timings of this module are flexible to enable you and your supervisors to develop a timetable that works for you. Some supervisors may prefer to book in a series of meetings in advance (particularly if they may be away for long periods over the summer) whereas others may prefer to make arrangements on a week-by-week basis depending on your progress and their schedule. **Any items listed in bold are fixed deadlines which must be adhered to.**

Remember that it is crucial that you take note of your supervisors' availability – many will be taking annual leave during the summer. You need to plan your requests for support around their availability.

Date	Details
<b>Monday 29<sup>th</sup> April</b>	Briefing session, 11:00 – 12:00, School of Geography Montpellier, Level 10, Manton Building
Through May	Meetings with your supervisory team for discussions about your projects, initially about the nature and direction of the dissertation proposal and consideration of any health and safety issues, then consideration of your proposed project in more detail.
You should then work independently on your dissertation proposal (1,500 words)	
<b>Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> May (2pm)</b>	<b>Submit your assessed dissertation proposal via the VLE</b>
	<b>Complete your risk assessment via the VLE</b>
w/c 17 <sup>th</sup> June	Individual meetings with your supervisor to receive feedback on your dissertation proposal. This should review your progress with your lit review and troubleshoot any analysis / methodological issues
Once you have received feedback on your proposal you should begin working fully on your dissertation. During the research period we suggest you have the following meetings with your supervisor (the exact timings may vary)	
early – July	Meet with your supervisor to discuss the final structures, research questions and to troubleshoot ongoing issues
early - August	Meet with your supervisor to discuss findings and write-up
<i>In addition to the formal meetings outlined above, you are likely to be in contact with your supervisor by email with progress updates and specific queries. Andy will also publish some time slots when he is available to give more generic advice, encouragement and troubleshooting support.</i>	
Friday 16 <sup>th</sup> August	Target date to have completed write-up, enabling you to spend the following week proof reading, editing, printing and binding. Remember that the University is shut over the August bank holiday weekend.
<b>Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> August (2pm)</b>	<b>Submit your final dissertation – remember you must submit an electronic copy (VLE) and two identical printed and bound copies (SES office)</b>

## Dissertation Submission Information and Support for Assignments

**This assignment contributes 100% to the mark for this module**

### Individual work

This is an individual assignment. Whilst it is natural to consult with your neighbour in the classroom and/or to help each other with unfamiliar software/laboratory/field work, it is not permitted to share research, ideas, data or text in preparation of any aspect of this dissertation. If we suspect that this has occurred it will be treated as academic malpractice\* and will be investigated according to university protocols. See: <https://www.luu.org.uk/helpandadvice/academic/cheatingandplagiarism/> for LUU information and advice on 'Plagiarism, Fraudulent or Fabricated Coursework and Malpractice'.

\*Malpractice includes collusion, i.e. working together with others to submit work which is not entirely your own (except where this is permitted for the specific assignment concerned).

### **Dissertation Format**

There are a number of formally prescribed rules for presentation of your final dissertation. Please look carefully at the section titled 'Dissertation Structure' for guidance on your dissertation structure. In addition, you must adhere to the following stylistic requirements:

- Your work must be typed in a font of 11 or 12 point with the lines one and a half spaced.
- There should be a title page containing your full name (as registered with the University), the date (month/year) of submission, the title of the dissertation and the phrase "A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the MSc in Data Analytics and Society, University of Leeds".
- There should be an abstract, summarizing in no more than 300 words the aims of your dissertation and outlining key aspects of your approach, main findings and conclusion.
- It is advisable also to include the following on the subsequent pages of your dissertation:
  - A statement of acknowledgment to any individuals or organisations whose assistance you may have received in undertaking your work
  - A table of contents setting out the structure of your dissertation in terms of chapters and their subsections (preferably numbered), giving the relevant page numbers
  - A list of tables and a list of figures, each numbered and page referenced.
- Please incorporate figures and tables within the main pages of the report. All figures should be numbered in order of appearance (Figure 1, Figure 2 etc.). All figures and tables should have informative captions that are fully descriptive and standalone (i.e. you could understand the figure just by looking at the caption and without reading the main text of your report). Do not include a figure or table without mentioning it and discussing it in the text.
- Do not present spare information in an appendix for the sake of it. The appendix is not marked. The dissertation should be understandable without need to refer to the appendix.

### **Dissertation Submission**

A copy of your dissertation should be submitted electronically through Turnitin by 2pm on the day of the deadline. See below for more information on VLE submission.

You must also submit two identical printed and bound copies in person at the School of Geography SES Office, Level 7, Garstang Building. Please see the sections of this document titled 'Assessment & Dates' and 'Dissertation Format' (above) for more information.

Your two 'hard' (printed and bound) copies should be A4 size. Margins on the bound edge should not be less than 40mm, all other margins should be at least 20mm. They can be printed single or double sided and soft bound (termed 'Fast Back Binding (glued with a spine)' using a *red* cover. The cover should include a label stating your name, 'MSc Data Analytics and Society' and the year of submission.

The University Print and Copy Bureau (located on campus on level 6 of the Roger Stevens Building) offers dissertation binding services.

Note: Delays during the printing and binding process do not constitute a legitimate excuse for a submission deadline extension. You must allow yourself sufficient time for printing (which you can carry out yourself or which can be undertaken by the binders for an additional charge) and binding. Remember that the

university is shut for an extended period during the late August bank holiday weekend during which technical support (e.g. IT) and binding services are unavailable.

### VLE Submissions

Your dissertation must be submitted electronically via the VLE. Each module and each assessment has an electronic 'pigeon hole'. This link can be found on the 'Assessments' tab on the main (left) menu of the VLE module screen, or located under the 'Learning Resources' section of the module. The time of the submission is logged automatically and compared to the deadline. Remember that you must download a digital receipt: **do not wait for email confirmation**. Late penalties (5 marks per 24h period after the deadline) begin to accrue from 1 second after the deadline. The electronic submission system allows you to submit at any time before the deadline, and you can upload many versions (i.e. drafts) but remember that each upload will overwrite the previous upload. If you upload after the deadline then you will need to use a separate Turnitin folder that is set up for late submissions and approved extensions. The time on the turnitin receipt for coursework is definitive in terms of monitoring late submissions. It is your responsibility to make sure that you have allowed enough time to submit your work and that you have a receipt. You are very strongly advised not to leave submission until the last few minutes, as your PC clock may not be perfectly aligned with the turnitin clock, and because files may not load instantaneously.

Turnitin accepts several document types, but in School of Geography the preferred format is Word document, saved either as .doc or .odt (if using OpenOffice). Only in rare cases will you be permitted to upload .pdf formats, and only with the prior permission of the module leader. Powerpoint (.ppt) files can be uploaded if these are appropriate to the assignment. Remember that the maximum file size is 40 MB.

### Word Limit

The word limit for this assignment is **8,000 words**. **Please note that there is no leeway for word length**. EVERYTHING is included in the word count EXCEPT the title, figures and tables (and their captions), the reference list, your abstract and contents page and any appendices. Note that citations are included in the word count.

It is School policy that a penalty for exceeding the word limit will be applied and students are required to provide an accurate word count on the coversheet of their assignment. Word counts will be checked randomly on electronic copies of submitted work, and misrepresentation of word length by a student is treated as a form of academic malpractice. The published word count for each piece of work is definitive. Five marks will be deducted from the mark allocated to the piece of work for every 10% (or part thereof) that a piece of work is over the limit.

Exceeds word limit by    Marks to be deducted

1 word-10%.....	5
10.1-20.0% .....	10
20.1-30.0% .....	15
30.1-40.0% .....	20
40.1-50.0% .....	25

If the word count exceeds the word limit by more than 50 per cent, the mark awarded for the work will be zero. Figure and table caption text should not be used to add interpretative text into an essay/report, but should simply describe the content of the figure or table in a limited number of words. The interpretation needs to be contained within the main essay/report text and thus be considered within the total word count.

### Students with a Specific Learning Difficulty

A Marking Consideration "e-sticker" is sent by the School Taught Student Office to **all students** who are known to have a Specific Learning Difficulty (eg dyslexia), or another disability **which affects their literacy**. These students qualify for marking consideration, and this 'stamp' will identify their work. Disability



Services determine eligibility. If you are eligible for Marking Consideration and have **not** been issued with a stamp, please contact your Taught Student Office as soon as possible.

### **Coursework Extension Requests**

Should you have any mitigating circumstances (see below) which lead you to request an extension to your coursework deadline, or prevent you from attending an examination, please use the online form that is available at the following link; <http://www.geog.leeds.ac.uk/extension-requests/>, or contact Claire Gorner 48 hours before the deadline or examination. Claire works in the Geography Student Support Office, and her email address is [c.gorner@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:c.gorner@leeds.ac.uk). [Nb Teaching staff are not authorised to grant extensions, all extension requests should be referred to the relevant member of support staff in your school.]

You may also discuss any difficulties you are having with your module or programme leader who may be able to advise you more generally on progress with your studies and on working to deadlines.

Note: Extensions are only granted in cases where a student has experienced serious difficulty which has prevented the completion of work within the normal time period. This may be due to illness, bereavement, family problems, or similar. Extensions are not granted for minor or short term problems, including IT issues.

Note also that the University observes an extended closure period around the late August Bank Holiday weekend. Ensure you allow sufficient time to consult with the Geography Student Support team if extensions or mitigating circumstances arise.

### **Mitigating Circumstances**

Mitigating circumstances are significantly disruptive or unexpected events which are beyond your control but which might affect your academic performance. If this applies, you should contact Claire Gorner (Geography students) or inform your parent school as soon as possible.

### **Late Submission Penalties**

It is your responsibility to make sure you are aware of the deadline for each piece of work. For work submitted electronically, the time of the submission is logged automatically and compared to the deadline.

A late penalty of 5 marks (5% of marks available) per 24h period or part thereof after the deadline, begin to accrue from 1 second after the deadline. If your assessed work is over 14 days late, you will receive a mark of zero and this will be noted as 'No serious attempt'.

### **Plagiarism**

Please make sure that you know what constitutes as plagiarism. The University defines plagiarism as presenting someone else's work as your own, including images and other material as well as text. Do not plagiarise, collude, or cheat in any way. All instances of plagiarism will be treated severely according to University disciplinary procedures. If you are unsure, check the University Library's plagiarism web pages: <http://library.leeds.ac.uk/skills-plagiarism>.

### **Referencing**

Referencing is the acknowledgment of the sources you used when producing your piece of work. Referencing correctly is important to demonstrate how widely you have researched your subject, to show the basis of your arguments and conclusions, and to avoid plagiarism.

You need to give the person reading your assignment enough information to find the sources you have consulted. This is done by including citations in your work and providing a list of references.

You are expected to use the University's version of the Harvard referencing style for your assignments for this module. Guidance on how to include citations within your text and how to reference different types of material using Harvard is provided here: <http://library.leeds.ac.uk/skills-referencing>.

### **Assessment and Marking criteria**

Your dissertation will be assessed using the School of Geography MSc CAMS Dissertation Marking Criteria. A copy of these can be found in the appendix.

We recognise the importance of your dissertation and ensure that your dissertation is marked by two members of academic staff. One of these is your dissertation supervisor, who has an excellent knowledge of your project. The second marker is another member of academic staff who has not been involved in supervising your dissertation. Each marker will independently assess your dissertation using the marking criteria and 'Assessment of MSc CAMS Dissertation pro-forma', a copy of which can also be found in the appendix.

The first and second markers then discuss their separate comments and agree a mark which they recommend to the exam board. Occasionally first and second markers may be unable to reach an agreement. In this case the dissertation will be sent to a third marker who sees the comments of previous markers and determines a final mark based on these comments and their own appraisal. Our external examiner (a member of academic staff from another institution) may also be asked to mediate in a mark decision. The external examiner will view a sample of all dissertations to check academic standards and marking procedures.

### **Skills@Library**

Skills@Library is available to all students and can help develop academic skills and strategies. There are workshops available in the Laidlaw Library on topics including planning your essay or dissertation, writing academically and referencing.

For 1-to-1 support on academic study skills you can talk to a Learning Advisor who can help you with developing a wide range of academic skills and strategies on topics including academic writing, critical thinking, researching and maths.

The Skills@Library website has lots of online help and information on study skills, referencing and how to tackle different types of assignments, as well revision and exam tips. You can also book workshops and one to one appointments through the website: <https://library.leeds.ac.uk/skills>.

Skills for Success is an essential guide for taught postgraduate students new to the University and is designed to help you further develop your skills for study and research at this level. It includes topics such as researching, referencing, writing dissertations and being organised.

<https://library.leeds.ac.uk/skills-postgraduate-support>.

### **Royal Literary Fund Fellow**

The Royal Literary Fund Fellowship scheme was conceived with the intention of placing professional writers in higher education institutions to offer writing support to all students. The principal aim of the Fellow's work is to foster good writing practice across all disciplines and media. In the Faculty of Environment the Royal Literary Fund Fellow is Emily Diamand. She is based in Geography in the Manton Building, room 10.127 (access is via the Geography School entrance in the Garstang Building) and works two days per week. Her email address is [e.m.diamand@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:e.m.diamand@leeds.ac.uk). *When emailing to book an appointment please make it clear that you are studying a Geography module.*

Typically, a student will see the Fellow, one-to-one, for up to an hour. The student will book into an available slot in the Fellow's published timetable. S/he may return several times during the year, providing the Fellow feels progress is being made. Other types of interaction with students, such as group work, seminars, etc., may be undertaken by the Fellow during the year (though some participants in the scheme

may prefer to stick to individual coaching). Students consult with the Fellow on a purely voluntary basis, although they may initially be responding to a tutor's recommendation.

**Support with Numeracy Skills**

A numeracy tutor, [Rachel Homer](#), is available to students within the School to advise on any aspect of maths and numeracy. This includes help with the various statistical techniques, planning the statistics element of your dissertation and interpreting the results within your dissertation. Rachel is available three days a week and half-hour meetings can be booked by emailing Rachel directly [r.m.homer@leeds.ac.uk](mailto:r.m.homer@leeds.ac.uk)

## Dissertation and Supervision Guidance

### Dissertation Supervision and Support

Your dissertation is a major independent piece of work and it is your responsibility to develop your own ideas and to undertake and manage your own research. We expect you to take initiative in all aspects of your dissertation. This includes liaising with your supervisors for advice and support.

All supervisors are experienced in dissertation supervision and the process for undertaking high quality research.

Your supervisors will help you to talk through and formulate your project ideas but will not provide you with a specific project. Your supervisors will be able to provide general guidance and suggestions, and may also be able to help you more specifically with particular methodological or technical issues. However, your supervisors do not know everything about your project/data/methodology and it is up to you to make decisions and to project manage your research. You should listen carefully to your supervisors' advice but it is up to you to decide whether the course of action they suggest is the right one. If you decide against their advice make sure you discuss this with them so that they know what you are doing.

Please do not expect your supervisors to be around all the time – staff are expected to undertake research trips, attend conferences and take annual leave during the summer. Annual leave provides a rare opportunity for academic colleagues to escape a demanding workload and your patience whilst your supervisors are out of contact on annual leave is appreciated. In all cases, supervisors are expected to clearly outline their availability so that you can plan your requests for support and face to face meetings.

**Supervisors are not able to comment on specific sections of your dissertation prior to submission as this is the text that they will ultimately have to mark.**

**Supervisors enjoy supervising MSc projects and there are rarely any issues. However, any problems with supervision must be brought to the attention of the module convenor (or in their absence the Director of Taught Postgraduate Studies) as soon as possible.**

### Formulating a dissertation idea

The dissertation is your opportunity to develop research in any area relating to the Geography components of your Data Analytics and Society programme.

As outlined in the dissertation briefing lecture, dissertations undertaken on this module:

- Will develop a detailed literature review
- Will detail research questions emerging from that review
- Will identify appropriate analytical methods to allow those questions to be answered, usually involving some form of **spatial analysis**
- Will identify appropriate **secondary data** that will be used to develop and answer the research questions later in the PhD (you may even undertake some initial descriptive analyses of the data as part of this submission)
- Represent a substantial piece of **academic research** but can be carried out with input from a company or other external organisation

In determining your topic, you should establish with your supervisors how it will fit into your PhD programme. This will help you to identify the scope of the work you will undertake. In general, you should adhere to the following ground-rules:

- Choose a topic that is relevant to your PhD study. This way you will be able to maintain momentum during the (inevitable) tedious moments.
- Ensure that you have the necessary skills to undertake your proposed project. Whilst dissertations provide a good opportunity to self-teach some new analytical skills, there is rarely sufficient time to teach yourself entirely new approaches or software.
- Consider whether the scale and scope of the project that you propose is achievable within the timescale of your dissertation.
- Think about whether the chosen topic and skills are relevant to your longer term objectives (e.g. the type of career you would like to progress into).
- Try to identify an original angle on your topic. It is recognised that all of a piece of work cannot be entirely original. However, the dissertation should contain elements of novelty and academic interest.
- Identify the specific aims and objectives of your research. What is the research question that you are investigating? A dissertation must have a focus. Do not just do 'a study of...'. Show the examiners that you are capable of distinguishing between important and irrelevant material and can test address research questions and reach logical conclusions.
- Spend time surveying the literature. Your dissertation should have a strong focus on the relevant literature and should make your contribution clear. Good literature reviews refer to a significant body of literature, not just a few hastily thrown together texts. **It is impossible to come up with a coherent dissertation idea without considerable reading.**
- Investigate the availability of secondary data sources, as well as considering if, when, and how to collect primary data.
- If your research will involve primary data collection (e.g. a survey of consumers or interviews with key stakeholders) then a full risk assessment will be required – see the separate section of this document titled 'Risk Assessments'.

## Obtaining Secondary Data

Most dissertations make use of secondary data sources. Obtaining suitable data in a timely fashion can be a tricky part of the dissertation process and you are strongly encouraged to carefully consider data availability at a very early stage (and certainly in advance of submitting your dissertation proposal). Some common sources of secondary data which may be useful include:

1. Small area (neighbourhood) census or governmental survey data are freely available in the UK (and in many international contexts). For the UK, try:
  - [census.ukdataservice.ac.uk](https://census.ukdataservice.ac.uk)
  - <http://www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk/dissemination/>
  - <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>
  - <https://www.ukdataservice.ac.uk/>
2. Lots of spatial data related to consumers is available via 'Open Data' portals:
  - Data related to Leeds is available via 'Data Mill North': <https://datamillnorth.org/dataset>
  - Or for Manchester: <http://open.manchester.gov.uk/>
  - Or for the UK as a whole: <https://data.gov.uk/>
  - There are many international examples too, such as: <https://data.melbourne.vic.gov.au/>
3. The CDRC can also be an excellent source of data: <https://data.cdrc.ac.uk/> and <https://maps.cdrc.ac.uk/>. Only datasets marked as 'Open' are available for dissertations
4. Your PhD partner very likely will be able to provide data. But, ensure that:
  - The can provide the data that you require within an acceptable timescale
  - That the data is complete/recent/contains what you think it should
  - That the owner of the data understands that it will be used within your dissertation

Your supervisor will be able to provide further advice, but you should carry out your own search for relevant data prior to your first meeting. Your supervisor will not provide you with data.

## **Risk Assessment**

Once you have formulated a dissertation idea you must begin preparing your risk assessment. You cannot undertake any work on your dissertation (with the exception of desk-based work on the university campus or at home) until you have completed a risk assessment. For many projects the risk assessment process will be very straightforward. Projects involving primary data collection (surveys, interviews etc.) will require a full risk assessment. Note that the risk assessment approvals process takes **at least 10 working days** – you must therefore plan ahead.

All students are required to submit their risk assessment before 2pm on Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> May 2019 (this is the same date as the dissertation proposal submission).

Risk assessments are completed entirely online using the module VLE Site. To begin your risk assessment you should navigate to GEOG5099M > Learning Resources > Dissertation Risk Assessment. Read the guidance notes 'Information you may find useful' before answering the 'Risk Assessment Pre-Assess Questions'. These questions will determine whether you need to fill out a full risk assessment. If you are required to fill out a full risk assessment then download the appropriate form and use the link 'Risk Assessment Submission Point' to submit your completed risk assessment form.

**Remember that you cannot undertake any fieldwork until your submitted risk assessment has been approved.**

## **Dissertation Structure**

The points outlined below are intended to serve as a guide to an advised structure for an MSc dissertation. They should be read in conjunction with the marking criteria (see appendix). Note that there is no prescribed format and each project may lend itself to a slightly different structure. Your supervisor is best placed to advise you.

You should also refer to the section titled 'Dissertation Format' for an overview of the stylistic and formatting requirements i.e title page, declaration of academic integrity (see Appendix 3)

Dissertations will normally include:

- **Introduction:** This chapter sets the scene and should clearly outline the 'research problem'. It will also outline the context for your project, and flag its relevancy. You should outline your research aims, objectives, questions and research hypotheses as appropriate, as well as indicating the scope and rationale of your dissertation. This will provide the 'terms of reference' with which the examiners will assess the dissertation. Your introduction chapter should close by providing clear signposting of the structure and organisation of the remainder of the dissertation.
- **Extended Literature review:** A critical review of relevant literature and issues provides the context for your work. You might wish to organise the review by the key themes that you have identified during your reading. This chapter should identify the gaps in the literature that you wish to fill with this research.
- **Methodology:** This chapter will contain a detailed description and justification for your chosen research methods: data and analysis. It will provide a sound summary of how you intend to design and undertake your research study – it essentially demonstrates *how* your research questions will be answered. You should be explicit about how you have gathered/collected your data, identifying all sources. You must give full details of what secondary data sets were combined and linked together. If you have collected primary data, you will need to describe your sampling strategy. If you undertook questionnaire surveys you should consider the issue of response rates and include a

copy of the questionnaire in an appendix. You should also indicate what type of analysis will be undertaken, including a formal description of methods (models, equations, pseudocode etc) and how these tools will be used to generate results (e.g. statistical analysis, spatial modelling etc.). You should also flag any limitations of the methodology that you anticipate from the onset (e.g. bias, out of date data sources, small sample size etc.).

- **Conclusion:** This involves a critical appraisal of the strengths and weaknesses of your proposed work and its implications for the wider research field within which your study is located. Make sure that your conclusions can be supported by the rest of your dissertation. Be sure to include a self-critique of your research methodology identifying potentially problematic areas that you anticipate, sources of uncertainty and their implications.
- **References:** At the end of your dissertation, there should be a list of references in alphabetical order by first author, giving **all** the works you have referred to in the body of your dissertation. There should be appropriate citations of each of these references using the Harvard Referencing System (i.e. author's name and date of publication) within the main body of the text. Your list of references should be positioned after your final chapter and before any appendices.

**Above all, please note that there is no single correct 'style' for a dissertation – your supervisor will be able to advise you.**

## Appendix One – MSc CDAS Dissertation Marking Criteria

### DISSERTATION MARKING GUIDELINES

Mark Range	Typical Characteristics
80–100 (Distinction)	<p>An <b>exceptionally good or outstanding dissertation</b>, already containing all the elements of a <b>very good dissertation</b> described below and excellent in virtually every respect. A highly appropriate, intellectually demanding and original topic with extremely well defined aims is identified within a very well-understood conceptual framework and based on an extensive if not exhaustive understanding of the literature.</p> <p>Research design, methodology, data collection and usage are thorough and innovative. High quality results, insightful interpretations and detailed discussion exhibit an outstanding ability to analyse, synthesize and evaluate. As appropriate, primary or secondary data sources or fieldwork are used extensively and extremely effectively.</p> <p>Abstract is a masterly summary. Very well organized, sharply focused and stylishly written. A particularly high standard of presentation.</p> <p>Dissertations which evaluate and identify a problem in a particular geographical domain at this level are likely to include material of publishable quality, typically requiring relatively little further revision.</p>
70–79 (Distinction)	<p>A <b>very good dissertation</b> in all or almost all respects. An appropriate and intellectually demanding topic with well-defined aims is identified within a well-understood conceptual framework based on extensive background reading and understanding of the literature. Insight, originality and a degree of critical reflection are properties usually distinguish work at this level.</p> <p>Research design, methodology and data-collection are thorough and well justified. As appropriate, fieldwork, other primary or secondary sources are used extensively and effectively.</p> <p>Conclusions are substantial and the abstract provides a very good summary. Contains insight and elements of originality. Well organized and sharply focused with a high standard of presentation.</p>
60–69 (Merit)	<p>A generally <b>good dissertation</b> on a well-chosen topic with clearly stated aims specified within an explicit conceptual framework and based on significant background reading.</p> <p>Well-chosen research design and methodology, though possibly with a few minor design flaws. Secondary data sources of information are used extensively though perhaps not to their full effect. Primary data collection including fieldwork as appropriate should be at least to some recognised minimum level required as appropriate for the application.</p> <p>Strengths in content and organization are characteristic, though insight and originality may be somewhat limited. Generally well presented. Upper end of scale may be used for dissertations exhibiting elements of distinction-class quality where a number of more minor problems, or a significant major problem, preclude a distinction-class mark. May also be used for an exceptionally original or innovative dissertation (approaching 'distinction' mark in this sense) that lacks proper attention to conceptualisation, research design and methodology, and/or presentation of results.</p>
50–59 (Pass)	<p>A more or less <b>competent dissertation</b> with adequately specified aims embedded within a recognizable conceptual framework, usually based on sound but possibly limited background reading. The topic may be solid but uninspiring.</p> <p>Though execution may be adequate, there may be only minimal justification of a research design and/or methodology that contains a small number of minor limitations or flaws. Data sources may be insufficient to get the best out of the</p>



	<p>project. If data collection reaches acceptable levels it may be flawed in other ways.</p> <p>Conclusions and abstract may be sound but unfocused. Weaknesses may be evident in organization or presentation (e.g. poor execution of graphics or word-processing).</p>
40–49 (Fail)	<p>A more or less <b>weak dissertation</b> with poorly specified aims and/or inadequate conceptual framework based on little background reading. Topic may have been poorly chosen; research design poorly devised.</p> <p>Methodology may be unexplained and data collection exhibit minimalist tendencies. Relatively poor, inadequate or unsuitable data sources may have been used. There may be evidence of weaknesses in planning and implementation.</p> <p>Conclusions and abstract may be repetitive, unfocussed, or incomplete. May be poorly organized with flaws in presentation. Strengths tend to be mainly those of effort and persistence; though the content may have some merit, little of the possible potential has been realized.</p>
1–39 (Fail)	<p>A <b>poor dissertation</b> which may have been carried out in good faith but exhibits several of the following serious deficiencies: aims poorly defined or lacking; little or no conceptual framework; methodology inappropriate or misunderstood; data collection and usage inadequate or nonexistent; limited discussion; superficial conclusions; missing abstract; barely acceptable presentation.</p>
0	<p>Failure to submit a dissertation or submitted so late the penalties produce a mark of zero.</p>

*Notes:*

- (1) There is no single correct model for a dissertation. These guidelines are flexible but are intended to provide useful indicative criteria.
- (2) Dissertations handed in late are penalized in line with normal University procedures. Extensions may be granted in exceptional circumstances but only by programme managers, not by individual supervisors.
- (3) The School of Geography marks within the 1–100 range; a mark of 0 is awarded when no dissertation is handed in.
- (4) Plagiarism in any form (including failure to reference material properly in a manner judged as tantamount to plagiarism) is wholly unacceptable and will incur standard University penalties.

## Appendix Two – MSc CDAS Dissertation Marking Pro-Forma

*School of Geography, University of Leeds*

### ASSESSMENT OF DISSERTATION

Name of student:

Masters: MSc CAMS

Student Number:

Dissertation title:

<b>The dissertation as a whole</b>	Dist	Merit	Pass	Fail
Identification & justification of <i>topic</i> :				
Clarity of <i>aims</i> :				
Dissertation <i>structure</i> :				
Coherence & <i>flow</i> (linkage of structural components):				
<b>Literature review</b>				
Awareness of relevant literature:				
Understanding of relevant literature:				
Critical engagement with literature:				
<b>Methodology</b>				
Suitability/coherence of <i>research design</i> :				
Appropriateness of <i>techniques</i> deployed:				
Skill in <i>application</i> of research techniques/methodology:				
Skill in <i>analysis</i> of results:				
<b>Original research</b>				
Sustainability of <i>conclusions</i> drawn:				
Consciousness of <i>limitations</i> :				
Integration of results with extant literature:				
<b>Presentation</b>				
Written style/mode of exposition:				
Referencing system:				
Spelling & grammar:				
Typing & layout:				
Figures:				

Name of examiner:

1<sup>st</sup> / 2<sup>nd</sup> marker:

Mark  
(%)

Final Agreed Mark

(%)

Report (specify strengths & weaknesses, justify mark):



UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

SCHOOL OF GEOGRAPHY

UNIVERSITY OF LEEDS

**DECLARATION OF ACADEMIC INTEGRITY**

This form must be completed, signed and attached to every dissertation submitted for a degree in Geography at the University of Leeds.

I have read the University regulations on cheating and plagiarism and I confirm that this piece of work is my own and does not include any unacknowledged work from any other sources.

I understand that the title of this dissertation and my name, as its author, may be included in an on-line catalogue of School of Geography dissertations. Also, that the mark/grade may be recorded on the dissertation when it is stored in the School of Geography. I agree to this.

Signed..... Date .....

Surname..... First Names.....

Programme of Study: Postgraduate MSc

MSc in Data and Society

Dissertation title

Dissertation tutor:

Word length\*

\* Word length - exclude bibliography, appendix, tables, diagrams

