

## **M.Sc. Dissertation Submission Guidelines**

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**PRELIMINARY PAGES** Numbered in Roman numerals printed in lowercase

**Title Page:** Title, name of student, year of submission and statement:  
“submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the  
Degree of Master of Science in xxx” (as applicable)

**Dedication Page** optional

### **Abstract**

The abstract should be no more than 350 words and not be longer than one page (single line spacing). A good abstract is difficult to write and can only be completed after the full dissertation has been finalised.

It should offer an overview of the dissertation; the nature of the area of study and why it was explored; the key research questions; the methodology used; and the key results and conclusions. In this regard, the abstract should be structured as follows, but presented as a continuous text with no sub-headings: purpose, objectives or research questions, methodology, results and conclusions.

### **Acknowledgement Page**

### **Table of Contents**

### **List of Tables (as applicable)**

### **List of Figures (as applicable)**

### **List of Appendices (as applicable)**

### **Glossary (as applicable)**

### **List of Abbreviations (as applicable)**

### **CHAPTERS**

## **Chapter 1 Introduction**

The introduction should be very brief and provide an overview of the research study in a clear and concise manner and it should address the following:

- The reasons for selecting the area of study, stating the problem being investigated
- State the aims and objectives of the dissertation clearly in the closing paragraph of the introduction. The purpose of the study, whereby the research aim, research questions and relevant underlying objectives and/or hypothesis need to be made explicit. The study's relevance and significance and how it adds to the theoretical body of knowledge in the field. A brief overview of the research methodology, outlining any limitations and assumptions. The overall structure of the dissertation.

## **Chapter 2 Literature Review**

- A preliminary literature review and background to the area of study.
- To present and to analyse, in a critical manner, that part of the published literature which is relevant to the research topic and which acts as the basis for a fuller understanding of the context in which the student is conducting the research.
- To show that the student has discovered and reported what was found to be relevant in the literature, while also providing details of the sources and search strategies used
- To show that the literature found by the students was understood and analysed in a critical manner. Students are reminded that being critical does not mean looking at the negatives only but rather forming an evaluation.
- To provide a discussion and analysis of the body of knowledge with the ultimate goal of determining what is known, and to identify any gaps in the coverage of the topic, in order to justify the reason(s) for the research and to draw appropriate inferences.
- To show that students know what the key variables, trends and 'actors' are in the chosen area of study, i.e. show that students are aware of the important issues that need to be investigated.
- To enable readers to be able to measure the validity of the choice(s) of research methodology, the appropriateness of the process by which the student will analyse the results, and whether or not the research findings are congruent with the published research.
- Do not include an exhaustive historical review. Assume that the reader has basic knowledge of the field. Review earlier works which are relevant to the study and emphasize pertinent findings, relevant methodological issues and major conclusions.
- What are the theoretical implications of the study and how does the study relate to previous work in the area?

### Chapter 3 Methodology

This chapter is that part of the dissertation where the student has the opportunity to justify to the reader the process by which the research aims / questions, which were derived by an analysis of the relevant literature, were answered. The chapter should also include the governing philosophy behind the methods employed.

Subheadings which might be pertinent include participants, apparatus and materials, procedure, data handling. State details on sampling techniques, psychometrics, and surveys. Include a theoretical section to describe mathematical models and statistical analysis as applicable. Information must be included which is essential for comprehension of method undertaken and for replication of the study.

As a guide, this chapter should:

- Refresh the reader's memory about (a) the problem being investigated, (b) the research aims / questions posed to guide the researcher in fulfilling the purposes of the study, (c) the hypotheses to be tested (if any).
- Include a description of the method chosen and why it was the most appropriate.
- Provide a detailed account of the research methodology, data gathering and analysis process in order to enable replication of the study
- Include a discussion of ethical considerations relevant to the study
- Acknowledge any weaknesses, difficulties or limitations associated with the chosen methodology and to discuss how these were overcome or minimised

Although each study will vary depending on the method and analysis technique chosen, the following aspects are typically addressed:

- Description of research design, including details of the internal validity and external validity
- Description of population together with a description and justification for the type of sample / sampling technique used (if any)
- Description of how the data collection instrument was developed, including details about the pilot study, and the reliability and validity testing performed
- Detailed description of data collection method (e.g., questionnaires, interviews, observations, content analysis)
- Description of the coding of data and how it was analysed
- Description and justification of statistical tests and analysis performed – ideally this should be the last paragraph of the methodology section

### Chapter 4 Results

This chapter presents the results from the data analysis only. Briefly state main results or findings and then report data in sufficient detail to justify your conclusions.

This chapter does not include discussing other research literature or the implications of the findings.

Most studies are likely to have a large amount of data which has to be considered. **This must be organised and presented in a logical and structured manner.** It is important that students present those findings that are relevant to their research aims/questions and not include all that was found out.

Usually the initial part of this chapter should outline any descriptive analyses performed. This should be followed by findings resulting from appropriate inferential statistical tests conducted (if any). Research results may also be appropriately presented in graphs, diagrams, pie-charts, tables, etc. Do not include raw data. Include tables and graphs to present results but do not duplicate data in tables/graphs in text. Tables and graphs should be given a title. In the graphs data has to be shown for each sector. Population included in data collection should be shown in each figure or table title. For graphs label axes.

## **Chapter 5 Discussion**

Present a good summary of findings and emphasize validity of conclusions. The purpose of this chapter is not just to reiterate what the student has found but rather to discuss what the findings mean in relation to the theoretical body of knowledge on the topic.

This chapter should also demonstrate that the objectives set out were met through the findings. In this regard, this chapter should be more than descriptive, and the student should discuss the findings in relation to the theoretical framework introduced in the literature review.

Any major differences and similarities between literature and the study findings should be highlighted. Where appropriate, the student may need to introduce new literature - particularly with qualitative research.

This chapter also should address the significance and practical implications of the findings, evaluation and interpretation of implications of results obtained including references to published work comparing findings. Discuss limitations of the study and propose recommendations for further study, listing the recommendations in order of importance.

## **CHAPTER 6: Conclusions and Recommendations**

In this chapter the student should present conclusions and propose recommendations.

The student should summarise the work of the dissertation and draw relevant conclusions based on the evidence obtained from the study. No new material or references should be placed here. The conclusions should make a statement on the extent to which each of the research aims, questions, objectives and/or hypothesis have been met. Students should be careful not to make claims that are not substantiated by the evidence presented in the earlier chapters.

This chapter should also include any recommendations for further research, as well as any implications for practice as drawn from the research findings.

## **References**

Only references cited in the text are included in the list. Cite reference in text with an author – date citation system and list references alphabetically in the references section. The references in the list should be listed in the International Committee of Medical Journal Editors Uniform Requirements for Manuscripts Submitted to Biomedical Journals. Please refer to: [http://www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/uniform\\_requirements.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/uniform_requirements.html)

### **Appendices (as applicable)**

Include raw data, questionnaires and scales, instruments used for data collection, informed consent forms, ethics approval, statistical calculations as relevant.

Students are encouraged to present at least 1 (submitted) or more papers in peer-reviewed journals. Students who have abstracts which have been submitted for conferences should include them in in this section. The paper(s) and abstract(s) must have been confirmed by the Supervisor.

### **Addendum (as applicable)**

Booklets, leaflets or CDs of material prepared by the student as part of the dissertation

### **PLAGIARISM**

Plagiarism is the representation of another person's work, without the acknowledgement of the sources, as one's own or the deliberate and unacknowledged incorporation in a student's work of material derived from the work (published or otherwise) of another.

Students are referred to guidelines on how to avoid plagiarism, using Turnitin and interpreting Turnitin reports available by the University of Malta

at <https://www.um.edu.mt/services/policiesforstudents> and [https://www.um.edu.mt/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/436651/UniversityGuidelinesonPlagiarism.pdf](https://www.um.edu.mt/data/assets/pdf_file/0007/436651/UniversityGuidelinesonPlagiarism.pdf).

Students are to submit dissertation through the Turnitin software and submit the report as a softcopy.

### **MANUSCRIPT PREPARATION REQUIREMENTS**

Margins	3.50cm (1.38 inches) left 2.50cm (0.98inches) top, bottom, right
Pagination	Preliminary pages carry lowercase roman numerals on right side of page  Numbers start from chapter 1 and continue throughout manuscript including appendices on right side of page
Spacing	double spacing

### General Presentation:

- Avoid using underlining
- Keep colours simple and use when necessary
- Where bullets are required, they should be indented and choose the style adopted in this example
- Title of sections should be bold and in Title Case
- Refer to sample for Cover, Title Page and Chapter Header
- Use of vocabulary that is gender-inclusive

### DISSERTATION CHECKLIST

#### 1. Quality Check

- all pages are present, appropriately numbered and consecutively included in document
- graphs and pictures included are clear and legible

#### 2. Title Page

- approved title of dissertation listed on cover and title page
- name of student and year of submission on cover and title page
- required statement included in title page

#### 3. Abstract

- adhere to maximum word length of 350 words

#### 4. References

- appropriately cited in text
- list of references included according to required format
- graphs, figures, pictures that are carried from other works appropriately referenced
- document checked for plagiarism- Refer to UOM *How to Avoid Plagiarism* resource pack available online at <https://www.um.edu.mt/operatingprocedures/doc/EDU-012-01>

## SUBMISSION

The University of Malta requires students to submit an **electronic copy of their dissertation** to the University Library. To this end, standards were developed by the University of Malta Library and are available on the [Library website](#).

It is the students' responsibility to read through the instructions provided in the **"Information for Students"** and **"FAQs"** web-pages.

Important points to remember:

- The ETD should be submitted as a single file in PDF format.
- The name and surname of the student should appear on the title page of the dissertation.
- Any other personal information about the students or their participants should not be visible in the dissertation.
- The PDF file should **not** include a declaration form; this is to be submitted to the Faculty as a separate document.

## USEFUL LINKS

**References** - [http://www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/uniform\\_requirements.html](http://www.nlm.nih.gov/bsd/uniform_requirements.html)

**Plagiarism Guidelines** - <https://www.um.edu.mt/operatingprocedures/doc/EDU-012-01> and [https://www.um.edu.mt/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/436651/UniversityGuidelinesonPlagiarism.pdf](https://www.um.edu.mt/data/assets/pdf_file/0007/436651/UniversityGuidelinesonPlagiarism.pdf).

**Library Website** - <https://www.um.edu.mt/library/etd>

**SPSS Courses** – <https://www.um.edu.mt/itservices/training/spsscourses>