Guidelines for MALT Dissertation
2019

Introduction

The aim of this module is to provide students with experience in conducting research on questions concerned with learning and teaching in various types of instructional situations, including reviewing the relevant literature, planning the research study, collecting and analysing empirical data, drawing appropriate conclusions, and presenting the findings of the project in a suitable format. On completion of the dissertation module the students would be able to:

- Demonstrate an integrated understanding and appropriate critique of the scholarly literature relevant to the research question being asked
- State and defend the importance of an appropriate research question concerned with learning and teaching at tertiary level (including further education settings)
- Demonstrate an understanding of the issues involved in research design and selection, including the ability to select and implement the research methodology most appropriate for answering the question posed.
- Demonstrate a capacity for self-directed enquiry, with support from an academic supervisor, and an ability to manage a complex research project (i.e., plan, collect, and analyse data relevant to the research question)
- Demonstrate an ability to present, both in writing and orally, the study and its findings and to answer questions on the theoretical and empirical context for the study, the importance of the research question, the appropriateness of the methodology and data analysis, and defend the reasonableness of the conclusions that were drawn from the study.
Key dates:

Interim Check Point Submission/Meeting:

- Date TBC – late March 2019
- You will be advised of the time in advance
- Bring 3 three printed copies

Dissertation (electronic submission): Wednesday July 31\textsuperscript{st} 2019 before 23:55

Viva: Week beginning Monday August 26\textsuperscript{th} 2019

Dissertation (final hard-bound submission): Monday 9\textsuperscript{th} September by 5pm

Interim Check Point

Students are required to submit a short document on dissertation progress and intent. The document will be discussed at a meeting between the student and the examiners. The student does not make a presentation but is required to answer questions on the research topic and question, the research method, data gathering, expected results and timeline for completion. This review will be marked with a weighting of 10\% of the dissertation mark (the marking scheme is at the end of this document). The Interim Check Point Document to be prepared by the student shall be about 2000 words and it will address the following issues:

- Background to the project
- Statement of the research question to be addressed
- Brief description of methodology and approach including ethical considerations
- Expected outcomes
Major implementation steps and timelines

The student will receive written feedback from the examiners. This feedback should be taken on-board by the student during the substantive work of the dissertation.

Supervision

Each student will be assigned a supervisor. It is recommended to consult the supervisor on an ongoing basis both face-to-face as well as via email and other electronic communication media. Students are expected to make contact with their supervisor at least every three weeks. Students are expected to share their draft work in advance of meetings with their supervisor. Prior to their first meeting with their supervisor students are advised to send a copy of the research question and literature review papers submitted in semester one. In this way the supervisor can have an opportunity to read these in advance. The student can also indicate their current thinking which may have moved on from these submissions.

Thesis Submission (loose bound)

The deadline is indicated on page 2 of this document.

Students will submit two floppy bound printed versions of their thesis to the school office and an identical electronic version by Turnitin Moodle.

Note that school policy on late submission will be strictly applied. Where a delay is as a result of a case of special circumstances the student is required to complete the necessary forms and to return these to the School Office. It is the responsibility of students to make themselves aware of the policies and procedures – all information is available via the student portal.

Two members of the Programme Board will be appointed to mark each thesis.

Presentations

Presentations will take place during the weeks in August 2019; students will be informed of the exact time of their presentation in advance.
Students will furnish a demonstration / presentation of their dissertation. Two examiners will be present along with the supervisor – the supervisor shall not act as an examiner. The presentations may be recorded and the extern examiner may also be present. The student presentation shall be 15 minutes followed by a question and answer session. Overall the process should take about 30 -35 minutes. Subsequently the Programme Board will convene a meeting to review the examination results and to ensure consistency in the marking.

Final Submission

Students may be asked to make changes to their dissertation by the examiners. One examiner will undertake to review these changes. The examiners must be satisfied that the necessary changes have been carried out before a mark can be awarded. Once the changes have been completed to the satisfaction of the examiner students may prepare for final submission. Deadlines are indicated on page 2 of this document. Students will also be required to submit electronic versions in accordance with NCI Submission of Thesis Policy (separate document).
Dissertation Format Guidelines

It is recommended that the dissertation should be in the range of about 23,000 to 25,000 words. The dissertation should be structured as shown below, however, titles of headings might vary as appropriate and subsections will be required to structure chapters.

**Title Page**  See template for layout

**Declaration**  Declaration of originality of the work

**Contents**  Table of Contents

**Abstract**  Maximum 300 words. The abstract should mention the problem being addressed, describe the method used (e.g., sampling, procedure, measurement), and briefly report the findings as well as conclusions drawn.

**Introduction**  This chapter should define the background to the problem being addressed and discuss the reasons for undertaking the research.

**Literature Review**  This should discuss and summarise relevant articles (journal papers, books and web references – with access dates) in the area in question. This section is meant to demonstrate knowledge of current research activity by the candidate and it should contain a categorisation of the published work. However, it is not a chronological review of the complete history of research.

**Hypothesis/Research Question**  This should give a detailed description of the problem area with a clear definition of the relevant issues, case studies and so on.

**Method**  This section should enable the reader to replicate the study. Thus, it should mention and describe
- the sample: sample size, important characteristics of the sample (e.g., age, sex, background, expertise), sampling strategy,
randomisation
- the procedure: instruction, typical procedure, treatments applied, examples of material used (e.g., screenshots), ethical issues
- the measurement: instruments used or applied for data collection, operationalization of theoretical concepts

Results This section will present the results, either a statistical analysis or a qualitative analysis or both. Statistical results must be reported with significance level, test power and effect size (as appropriate).

Discussion In this section further conclusions are drawn based on the results. Opportunities and limitations of generalizing the results are discussed.

Future Perspectives This should give concluding comments on the research work and indicate directions that future investigations might take.

References It is recommended that candidates use the APA or other internationally approved style. Here is an example of the APA citation style:
In the text this article can be cited as “Wilcox (1991)” or “(Wilcox, 1991)”.
References to web sites must include the access dates.

Appendices Instruments used, screenshots, instructions, etc.
Assessment

Allocation
Interim Check Point  10%
Final Submission      90%

Assessment Criteria
- Fit with module objectives and learning outcomes
- Originality of its content
- Extent by which it contributes to scholarship in a particular domain
- Rigor of its arguments
- Ability on the part of the student to contextualise their subject matter in a broader social/political/economic or indeed policy environment.
- Capacity for independent verification
- Compliance with formal requirements (references, citations, structure)
- Clarity and completeness of literature review
- Clarity and focus of research question/hypothesis
- Appropriateness of research methods chosen
- Accuracy and carefulness of documentation of empirical work and data analysis
- Adequacy and support for conclusions and future work
# Marking Scheme (Final Submission of Dissertations)

Student name:  
Dissertation title:  
Supervisor:  
Examiner I:  
Examiner II: 

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<tr>
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Comments:

Required changes (if any):

Changes are to be verified by
- [ ] examiner 1
- [ ] examiner 2
Marking Scheme (Interim Check Point)

Student name: 
Dissertation title: 
Supervisor: 
Examiner I: 
Examiner II: 

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Comments:

Required changes (if any):

Changes are to be verified by
☐ supervisor
☐ examiner(s)